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SEEMING
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A Seeming Trifle. FRONTISPIECE.

A

SEEMING TRIFLE.

BY

MRS. M. JEANIE MALLARY.



AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,

150 NASSAU STREET, NEW YORK.

(1892)

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A SEEMING TRIFLE.

CHAPTER I.

A JOURNEY TO THE SPRINGS.

IT was a busy, bustling time in one house in the Southern village of L—— on a bright Tuesday in July. Before the door stood the omnibus and a dray of trunks, while within the house five people were trying to get away. Dr. Greyson stood waiting patiently for his wife, whose directions to the servants seemed never-ending, while George and May whispered,

“Aunt Nancy, please don’t forget to feed Carlo.”

“No, nor my little kitty,” chimed in May; “but please don’t give her any milk, for she might have fits, you know.”

Olive stepped out into the yard to gather some half-blown buds, pinning them upon her travelling dress so as to carry with her a little fragrant memory of home, when from the gate the impatient driver called,

“All aboard !”

Then there was hurrying to and fro within the house and down the front walk, but one little voice called back,

“Please, Aunt Nancy, don’t forget; she might have fits, you know.”

A waving of handkerchiefs from the omnibus windows, a prolonged whistle from the engine, a few strokes of a bell, then puff-puff-puff, and the Greysons were off upon their summer outing. At first George and May could each have a window, and they kept up a continual chatter, calling each other’s attention to this and that, claiming the first-seen beauties of the landscape, and good-naturedly disputing about the ownership of tree, streamlet, or whatever else went whirling by. Olive sat alone, calmly happy. At first her gaze was fixed without at the panorama passing before her eyes. Here were vast cotton-fields white with creamy blossoms; then in the whirl of a dance dense forests passed; but in a moment they were gone, and a beautiful river with tree-fringed banks was slowly crossed, while happy boys in bateaux waved their hats and shouted; then faster and still faster upon the solid earth they sped along, now in deep cuts, then upon embankments, now over high trestles whose delicate tracery made one shudder, then through covered, noisy bridges—

but whatever it was, it was delightful. Becoming weary with watching the outside world, Olive turned her eyes within and began a study of her fellow-passengers. She had heard that there was no better place for the study of human nature than in a car full of people, so she determined to begin observations.

“As every seat is turned like mine,” she said to herself, “and the conductor refuses to allow them to be changed, I do not see what I can find out by studying people’s backs. There is nothing very entertaining about them, I am sure. Yonder is a gentleman with a very red neck, broad, dusty shoulders, and from the crumpled condition and shade of his collar, I should imagine that he had recently arrived, without stopping, from Tokio. But no, I must n’t begin my studies with criticisms. The gentleman must be making observations himself, for he turned and looked around, and when my eyes met his jolly blue ones I could not keep my face from flushing to think of what I had thought of his rear appearance. You cannot certainly judge people by their backs, not on the cars at least. Now that lady yonder with that pretty little girl, her collar is as crisp and glossy as though fresh from some Chinese laundry, and her dress is stylish; while the child, with her soft flaxen curls and pearly skin, is lovely, and beau-

tifully dressed. Here is certainly a pleasant study.

“The mother has just spoken to the little one, who is now pouting and looking positively ugly, and when she did not mind, her mother seized her shoulders, set her down hard upon the seat, and, I imagine, said, ‘Now stay there, miss.’ The child is crying. I can hear her above the rattle of the cars and rush of the steam. Poor little thing! How unnecessary that discipline and how quick-tempered and severe the mother! Her fashionable dress and snowy collar have lost their charm for me. I cannot bear to look over on that side any more to that dear little creature fairly pinioned to the seat and made to act like grown-up people. Since the child would n’t stop crying her mother has given her a good shaking, and now is forcing her to take a nap, to relieve herself of further trouble. I’ve had enough of this study—wish that stylish mother would move her seat behind me so I could n’t see her any more. I will keep my eyes on my own side of the car.

“There are so many indifferent-looking men over here, some evidently of foreign extraction, some American, but I see none that I feel like singling out as a special study. Beyond them is a dear old fat lady who has a little boy with her, grandson perhaps. I know that she is kind and

good-natured by the very quick way she turns about and moves her plump big hands and looks this side and that. Now she has pulled out her lunch-basket and told the little fellow to help himself, and chicken, biscuit, and cake are flying fast. He is not afraid to look around either, and there is love and confidence in his eyes when they are fixed upon his grandmother's face. There is no style about the dear old fat lady, and her collar—why, she has none on, only a piece of black ribbon tied around her large, creased neck, and her dress is dingy and well-worn; but I don't care, my heart runs out in love to her, for I know that she is good and motherly."

For some time Olive Greyson kept up a study of people's backs and made a mental inventory of traits of character. At length, nothing striking presenting itself, in a half-dreamy condition she viewed the world without and within, when the monotonous clatter of the cars and puff of the engine lulled her to sleep. Refreshed by her nap and lunch, the afternoon was spent in fresh observations and new discoveries. Not many changes had been made among the passengers; the dear old fat lady and mother of pretty flaxen-hair were still there; but as night approached the car began to fill fast. Seeing the rush of travel, the cross mother secured a

seat in front of her, stretched the child upon it, then filled the seat beside herself with a lunch-basket and wraps in a shawl-strap. Some of the men threw themselves across two seats, and though it was early for bedtime, feigned sleep and did not stir when there were fresh arrivals. A few sat up and made room for new-comers, and so far every one had been accommodated; but presently a young lady entered and walked down the aisle in search of a seat. Her father had been compelled to give her a hurried kiss within the car door, as the train remained but a moment at this station, and turn her over to the care of the conductor. Our dear old fat lady immediately took her little grandson upon her very limited lap and motioned the young lady to the seat by her side, which was gladly accepted. The conductor protested and said he would make the selfish men occupy but one seat, but the old lady laughed and replied,

“Do n’t wake them; the world would be better off if they slept on for ever.”

Hearing this, a young man in the seat behind sprang up, rubbed his eyes and stretched, as though he had been asleep a long, long time, and said,

“Oh did you wish a seat, miss? Here is one by me.”

The proffered seat was accepted. The little

boy was laid upon the cushion again, the old lady drew a sigh of relief, and everything lapsed into silence ; but it was only for a few moments, for the next comer was an elderly woman, and the child's place was given up to her, while he was crowded upon the floor at their feet, his only bed and pillow an old shawl. At midnight a crippled old man got on board and hobbled up and down the aisle, and this time every seat was honestly filled. The conductor looked this way and that, and approaching a strong, healthy young man, said,

“Will you be kind enough, sir, to give up your seat to this lame old man? Some one will be compelled to stand for a short time.”

Whereupon the strong, healthy young man touched his pocket and said gruffly,

“I've paid for my seat, sir.”

Olive thought, “What if a gold chain does dangle from his pocket and a diamond flash upon his finger, could anything make that man a gentleman?”

Up sprang our old lady, who said, as she scrambled over the little boy at her feet,

“I don't lay any claim to being a gentleman, Mr. Conductor, but I make some claim to being a woman, and no woman can sit and see a crippled old man stand while she has a comfortable seat to give him. Here, my friend, take my

seat here; it's rather crowded, but it's better than none, and I hope you will enjoy it. I shall enjoy standing up and looking down on these would-be gentlemen who can sit and see an old man begging for a seat, and he a cripple at that."

Immediately several men arose and offered the old lady their seats, but she indignantly refused them all and took her stand in the aisle. Dr. and Mrs. Greyson had given up their children's seats, Dr. Greyson holding George, Mrs. Greyson May, both fast asleep, so they could do nothing. Olive was fully awake to the situation of affairs, for she had been studying the passengers near her for some time and had scored them down by her own standard, and some were low indeed. Scarcely had the old lady filled the aisle when Olive sprang towards her and said,

"I claim to be a woman too, my good friend, a much younger woman than you, so please let the old gentleman occupy my seat and you keep your own. I shall be glad to stand."

After some persuasion the old lady resumed her seat and Olive conducted the lame man to her own and with flashing eyes took her stand at the arm of her father's seat and stood erect. All the men were awake now; some offered their seats, which were rejected, and all seemed restless, while the young man with the golden

chain twisted it around his fingers in evident discomfiture. Not all of the men in that long car were devoid of chivalry; they had only left the gentleman at home and now personated only the selfish traveler.

It was but an hour that Olive stood, and then several passengers leaving, she had her choice of seats. An old lady, hugging a black bottle, took the seat in front of Olive, and, after looking around for some time as though uneasy, began conversation. Clutching hold of the arm of her seat, while she turned her head to talk, she exclaimed,

"This is just awful! I tell you it's dangerous to be flying along so, and of a dark night too. Why, how can they see which way to go? They might run against something, and then what would become of us, sure enough? I declare, I wish I was off this thing. These engines are the dangerestest things I ever saw. Look at that now, plunging and squirming! I shall be thrown out of this window directly; and now—goodness! we shall turn over, tilting down so, I know we shall, with all these folks on top of us!"

Olive could scarcely repress a smile at the old lady's simplicity, but she checked it as she asked,

"Is this your first ride on a train, ma'am?"

"No, second, and if ever I do get off alive, I know I'll never get on another. It takes all my time to hold on; I can't talk much; wish I could."

"You need n't hold on, ma'am. Suppose you just sit back and give yourself up to the motion of the car; you'll enjoy it after you get accustomed to it."

"But, child, it's dangerous to be flying along so, and they told me at the station there was a river not many miles off. I tell you what, we'll land right in the middle of it if they a'n't more careful, for it's a powerful dark night."

"We've passed the river, ma'am."

"Have we? How d'ye know?"

"I saw it through my window."

"Well, I do feel better to know it. Just see that now, did you ever see such pitching about? first to one side and then t' other! I just know I shall never get home safe to my old man in the world."

"Where do you live, ma'am? Are you going far?"

"No, child, I'm glad to say I a'n't, leastways not on these cars. You see I live in South Carolina on a nice farm, far from these railroad-tracks I'm glad to say, and I had a neighbor, Mandy Jelks, who had also a farm close to ours. Sam Jelks died of the fever last summer, and

Mandy and my old man looked after her place after that. But 't was lonesome work without Sam, I tell you it was. After a while Mandy was took with the fever too and I nursed her as best I could, but she died and left a little baby about one year old. I promised her when she died that I would take that little darling and put it in her ma's hands myself. I have done it. Mandy was buried last Thursday; so Friday I started for her folks in North Georgia to fulfil my promise. I was scared to death of the cars, but my old man said it was all right, and he has never fooled me yet; so I took my seat mighty uncertain like, and with the poor baby crying most all the way, I got there and fulfilled my promise, for I put that baby right in its grand-ma's arms with these very hands of mine. (Just see that now! I declare we shall be killed outright!) Many tears were shed; I don't say but what some fell from my own eyes; but it's all over now and I'm on my way home, if I ever do get there. Now you see my old man was born in North Georgia, and I've heard him tell often of the spring on the old farm and how sweet the water was; that there was no water in all South Carolina that could compare with it. So when I got to the station near the old farm, all unknown to him I took a hack and went five miles to fill this bottle, and I'm carrying it to him from the

old spring under the chestnut-tree where he so often played. 'T wont be so cool as 't was when first I filled it, but it will be sweet to him and he wont care about its coolness. My! I'm that tired I don't know what to do, bouncing up and down in that old hack all by myself for ten miles; but I stopped at the last station to see an old friend yesterday, and now I'm on my way home."

"Wont you try to sleep, ma'am?"

"La, child, I wish I could! but there's the bottle and here's these cars flying to destruction and carrying us along too. Why, I'm scared to close my eyes."

"You need not be afraid, ma'am," Olive said soothingly; "you are just as safe when asleep as when awake."

Then arranging her shawl for the old lady's pillow, she said,

"Now put your head down here and take a good nap, and you will feel so much better. I will hold the bottle for you till you wake, if you will trust me."

"How kind you are, child! Yes, I'd trust anything to you, and here's the bottle to hold. But maybe you are sleepy yourself, a'n't you?"

"No, ma'am, I've had my nap, so now you just shut your eyes and take a good sleep."

"Honey, will you hold my bonnet too? I

see the men put their hats in those basket things up there, but I'm not going to trust my Sunday bonnet in any such place; it might go on an exploring expedition out of the window. Ha! ha! ha! and what would my old man say when he saw me coming home bareheaded? My! but he'd think—there's no telling what he would think. Will you hold this along with the bottle too?"

Olive took the dingy black, old-fashioned bonnet, with its quilling of lace inside, in her hands very tenderly and laid it on the cushion by her side and congratulated herself that the old lady was sleeping, but in a moment the gray head popped up and she asked anxiously,

"I just can't shut my eyes without you promise you'll wake me up if these cars run off the track; will you, honey?"

Olive promised, and then the head sank back and nothing more was seen of it for an hour. The train stopped, passengers got out and passengers got in, but the old lady slept on.

Across the aisle now sat a woman with five little children, one a baby in arms and the eldest about eight years of age. They were going to see "grandma" and "grandpa." Olive caught that much, and she saw their eyes shining brightly at the happy times they were expecting. That they were poor children was evident from

their clothes and bare feet, but this did not keep them from having joyful little hearts. One child, less timid than the rest, crossed over to Olive's seat and began conversation. Olive opened a small box of candy in her satchel and held up a little pink candy rat. Never had the child seen such a wondrously beautiful thing, and, assuring herself that it was not alive, she took it carefully by the string tail and with exclamations of delight held it up for the admiration of the others. Such laughter and shouts rang through the car, each child begging to hold it! Olive searched her box, and, to her joy, found four more rats, two white and two pink, and handed them over to the little ones. No gift of gold would have given them such pleasure as these candy rats. At length their station was reached, and with smiles and good-bys for Olive they left the train, and the last she saw, as the cars went whizzing by, were five rats dangling in the air before the face of a laughing old gentleman.

Soon the station was reached where the old lady was to change cars, and Olive touched her shoulder gently; but she sprang up in alarm, crying out,

"Are we off! are we off!"

Olive quieted her fears, handed her her bonnet and then the bottle, receiving her heartfelt

thanks in return. In spite of his hurry she made the impatient conductor wait while she added some more thanks to those already given Olive, then a loud kiss with the words,

“Honey, if ever you do come down my way be sure to come right to my house; I and my old man will be powerful glad to see you. Good-by.”

Then she got out, and though Olive thanked her for her warm invitation, she smiled, remembering that the old lady had given her neither her name nor place of residence.

For nearly twenty-four hours Olive Greyson had been studying character; had she done any character-building herself?

CHAPTER II.

AN APOLOGY.

By night our party had reached their destination, the ——— Springs of Virginia. Dr. Greyson had already secured a cottage by letter, and as they drove up to the hotel, under the glow of electric lights the grounds seemed fairyland. After an elegant supper and a cool drink of mineral water, worn out with the fatigues of travel our party were soon in deep sleep. Bright and early the children were up and out, admiring everything their eyes rested upon. Olive sat in her room awaiting the announcement of breakfast, for she too had risen early, and one of the first articles she had removed from her trunk was her Bible. As her custom was every morning, so now she read the passages connected with her Sunday-school lesson, then a chapter, her daily lesson, and then she placed it upon the little centre table. Approaching the window, she saw young and old going for a morning drink at some favorite spring. Mostly they were pleasure-seekers, rich, fashionable people, elegantly dressed in elaborate morning toilets, young men and young ladies laughing and chat-

ting merrily, planning for the day's diversion as though their one thought was to while the hours away. It was a novel, fascinating scene to Olive, and she could not help wondering whether in all that gay company she would find a young congenial friend, and in her heart she hoped so. She was neither gay nor fashionable; her dresses were neatly fitting and sensible, but neither gaudy in colors nor fabulous in price, and not once did she look upon the costly costumes and gay flying ribbons before her and feel dissatisfied with the wardrobe her own trunk contained.

Breakfast announced, they repaired to the dining-room, securing a table to themselves; and, to tell the truth, they were somewhat shocked to hear the loud laughter and slang phrases which passed across the room from table to table among some of those fashionable people. A grand picnic had been planned, she learned, by some of the young people to a neighboring mountain, and soon the rumble of wagons was heard on the grounds, hilarious voices shouted aloud to each other, and the party left. The day was more quiet after the gay company were gone, and the Greysons thoroughly enjoyed it. Olive took a magazine she had found upon the parlor-table, and selecting a lovely shaded spot, where was a rustic seat close to the banks of a clear stream, she gave herself up to the pleasure

of the morning. George and May were rambling everywhere in quest of new beauties, and Dr. and Mrs. Greyson were enjoying their freedom from care and an out-door life, making friends here and there, breathing in the delicious mountain air, and drinking freely of the icy cold water which poured in abundance from numberless springs. One might well thank God for life in such a spot as this, so beautiful, strength-imparting, and health-bringing. It was more lovely than Olive had even dreamed, and over the grand scenery of wooded mountain and fertile dell her eye would wander in admiration, absolutely refusing to be chained for any length of time to the pages before her.

Two days had passed, and yet Olive had met none of the gay people at the Springs. Yet she was happy with her family, her thoughts, and her books for companionship. She knew that the young people spent their time in the parlors in the mornings either playing cards or engaged in frivolous conversation; in the afternoons she knew they slept until the sun was nearly down, then indulged in walks over the grounds in beautiful attire; and later, in costly ball-dresses, they danced the night away. She had no desire to know these women who wasted their time laughing, dancing, and flirting.

Once, when she had been reading for some

time in her favorite work, she raised her eyes as a gentleman crossed the rustic bridge that spanned the stream at her feet. His back was turned towards her, and something familiar about him made her start.

"Surely," she thought, "I have seen those shoulders before. How funny that I should recognize his back. Oh it is my old gentleman from Tokio! His coat and collar are all right now, both fresh and nice. How did he come here, I wonder, so far from home! But how do I know where his home is? I wish I could see his blue eyes again. Oh there!"

Scarcely had the thought found its way into Olive's brain when the old gentleman turned his head and the blue eyes were fastened upon her. It was but a moment's glance, and then he recrossed the bridge and walked straight up to her, saying,

"I thought I knew you, and now I am sure of it, for you have such a trick of looking away when people look at you, as though you did n't know it at all. Do you think that fair, square, and honest, miss?"

"Perhaps you mistake diffidence for duplicity, sir."

"Perhaps so; I am willing to think so anyhow, would rather think so, in fact. What are you doing here, miss?"

"The same, I suppose, that you are, sir," and Olive could not help being amused at the novel situation in which she found herself. At her answer the old gentleman laughed heartily, shook his head, and said,

"I came to meet my wife and daughter; did you come for the same reason?"

"Well, no, sir," and Olive laughed merrily. "Having neither wife nor daughter to meet, I must confess that our reasons for coming to the Springs are different."

"I wont press that question any further. But see here, miss, you insulted me on the Air Line the other day, and I have sought you out to demand 'honorable satisfaction.'"

"Will you please explain the nature of the insult I offered you, sir? I am sure it was unintentional on my part."

"You said I was no gentleman, did not even know the definition of the word 'chivalry.'"

"Upon what occasion did I say this, sir?"

The old gentleman's blue eyes twinkled as he replied,

"On the occasion of your journey the other day. You said it plainly that hour you stood up in the cars, just the very longest hour of my life. Why, it seemed to me it never would end. If my baggage hadn't been checked for way up the road, I would have left the train,

making believe it had been my intention all along. But that would have been a story, and I do believe I am a truthful man if I am not a gentleman; and then, besides, I might have lost my trunk. I wished a thousand times I was out of that old car; every other man in it wished the same. What in the name of sense did you want to insult us all for anyhow?"

"I am not sure that the insult was on my side at all, sir."

"You are not, hey? Well, I would just like you to show me—but no, I won't ask it. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Please don't let us speak of it any more," said Olive, looking distressed.

"I am sure that *I* am the one who ought to want to drop it; but the truth is, I am glad to say, I was asleep when the whole thing happened, but waked up soon after, and when it was explained to me by my *confrère*, and I heard you positively decline any gentleman's—man's—seat, I felt guilty, for I was in the crowd and had to bear the stigma with the rest. I am very sure that car full of gentle—no, men, I mean—will never forget that lesson, that object lesson—a beautiful woman giving her seat to an old cripple, and she standing, towering above and looking down upon us. I didn't enjoy my ride after that, and the truth is, the retrospect is not very

agreeable now. How long will you remain at the Springs, miss?"

"Perhaps a month, sir; it may be longer. It is so delightful here, I hope papa may conclude to remain throughout the summer."

"May I ask your father's name?"

"Certainly, sir; Dr. Greyson of L——, Georgia."

"And yours?"

"Olive, sir. Olive Greyson."

"Well, perhaps you don't want to know mine, but I am going to tell you anyhow. Mine is T. K. Bell, of Alabama. Now we have reversed the order and exchanged cards last. My wife and daughter are in New York, and will perhaps meet me here next week. I hope we shall become well acquainted before we leave."

"I hope so indeed, sir."

Some one calling "Judge Bell," he arose and left.

"This, then," thought Olive, "is Judge Bell of Alabama, my old gentleman from Tokio with the broad dusty shoulders, crumpled, soiled collar, and kind blue eyes. You cannot always judge people by their backs, not on the cars at least."

CHAPTER III.

AN INTRODUCTION.

"A YOUNG man of my acquaintance, Miss Olive, wishes to make an apology to you."

"To me, Judge Bell? For what?"

"He will explain himself. I must not anticipate. May I introduce him to you now? I would not ask it did I not consider him a suitable companion for my own daughter."

"Thank you, sir, for your consideration. Yes, sir, whenever it suits your convenience I shall be pleased to meet your friend."

Walking over to a group of young people, Judge Bell beckoned to a handsome young man, and together they approached the rustic seat upon which Olive generally sat when enjoying a book. The face was entirely strange to Olive, and the casual glance she gave as they approached, conversing as they came, persuaded her that there was intelligence blended with refinement and true nobility of soul expressed in every feature. Was it any wonder that this simple village girl should feel a sensation of pleasure when about to be introduced to an elegant young man, especially when the introduction was sought by him?

"Miss Greyson, my friend Mr. Manning," Judge Bell simply said, and turned and walked away.

As Mr. Manning took a seat upon a large rock near he said,

"Miss Greyson, I thought people came to the Springs for recreation and pleasure, but your inseparable companion seems to be a book."

"Is a book, Mr. Manning, incompatible with recreation and pleasure?"

"By no means; yet one pleasure becomes monotonous when long and continuously pursued, do you not find it so? Human nature calls for variety, and it seems to me it is well to let our pleasures during our summer trips be entirely different from those we have at home. Reading, I see, is your pastime; then why not deviate now and let books alone for the summer?"

"What would you advise instead, Mr. Manning?"

"Something I am persuaded you never indulge in at home, that would have the spice of variety if nothing else. Join that company of young girls yonder, talk nonsense, and let the bow be unstrung. The mind at tension loses its elasticity; do you not think so?"

"Yes, sir; but I am in no danger from this cause, for my mind has never been tightly

strung, and I am sure there is nothing in this volume to increase the tension, since it is only a romance founded upon history."

"You asked me, Miss Greyson, what I would advise instead of reading. I have a good substitute at hand, for I came to ask that you will join our party in a ramble for wild flowers to-morrow."

"Thank you, Mr. Manning; it will give me great pleasure to become one of the ramblers."

"Our expectation is to start very early, take our dinners, and have a picnic in the woods."

"That will be perfectly delightful."

"You are not such a bookworm then as to be afraid of the long walk this excursion will involve?"

"Oh no, indeed; I am a country girl, accustomed to long rambles and enjoy them."

"I thought Judge Bell said you were from the town of L——, Ga."

"That is my home, sir, yet it is but a little village, where every house insists upon being surrounded by a miniature farm; so we are country people after all."

"One week ago to-day, I believe, you were on the Air Line, were you not?"

"Yes, sir. Just one week ago to-day we left home. How short the week has seemed!"

Without noticing her last sentence, he went on :

“ I was a passenger on the same train myself, I regret to say.”

Olive looked up with surprise ; but just then he gave a twirl to his watch-chain, and the diamond upon his little finger made her start. Here was the very young man who had sat some distance in front of her and for whom she had felt such contempt when he replied to the conductor, “ I have paid for my seat, sir.” She had not seen his face, had only noticed his habit of twirling his watch-key and the flashing of the diamond ring. Olive turned sick at heart, for here was another she had reproved upon that memorable ride, and perhaps too hastily.

He went on :

“ My sister has been here several weeks, but I only arrived yesterday. As soon as I saw you, Miss Greyson, I recognized in you the young lady whose tender feeling for the aged and afflicted, whose warm womanly heart, and whose utter and just contempt for selfishness, prompted her to perform a brave, independent act that will be a lesson to me all my life. I thank you for what you did, even though I and every other man upon the train went down below zero in your estimation. While I thank you, Miss Greyson, I want to say one word of apology for the

thoughtless act of which I was guilty ; and I feel that to you, and you alone, this apology is due. I do not excuse myself, I do not ask you to excuse me, and yet, in extenuation of my fault, I want to say one word. A man travelling as much as I am compelled to do is often needlessly called upon to give up his seat in the cars, and, excuse me for saying so, to ladies who sometimes demand two seats, one for themselves, the other for baskets and bundles, when one is all that they can claim by right of purchase. In a business point of view, is not a man who purchases a ticket entitled to a seat? He certainly is, yet he is often called upon to stand long distances, and his patience is sorely tried during the travelling season ; and this may occur in one train after another. What is the solution of this difficulty? Must the conductor refuse admittance to all who cannot be accommodated with seats? Were this the rule of travel the public would feel very uncertain, and an urgent trip might be postponed for weeks, perhaps indefinitely. It is then the conductor's place to receive all who come. What now is the traveller's duty? Evidently to pay for one seat and to occupy it. 'First come first served' is the rule in ordinary life, and in the case of railway transportation it should be the rule too. If the train is full when I enter I must expect to stand.

Am I feeble and afflicted, it is my misfortune, but I have no right to demand of another what is really his, what he has just made his by purchase."

"You speak, Mr. Manning, of 'the rule in ordinary life.' Would this hold good in Christian ethics? You speak too of the 'rule of travel;' but is there not a 'Golden Rule' which distinctly defines the course we should pursue towards our neighbor, a rule whose demands are more imperative than any other? By this rule is it not right for us to sacrifice our own comfort for another's, not for a selfish woman, but for a poor afflicted creature to whom standing would be pain? Excuse me, sir, for deciding against your system of ethics, but I cannot agree that it is the part of business, humanity, or Christianity for one to keep his or her seat when an afflicted person stands, even though that seat be paid for a thousand times over. I am truly sorry for the occurrence on our trip, for I would not intentionally wound or reprove another where my duty is not concerned, though, were the same thing to occur again, I should do again as I did upon that occasion. I freely confess, however, that I erred myself in refusing the seats offered me by nearly every gentleman upon the train. It may have seemed that I preferred to stand and enjoy the discomfort of the gentlemen

passengers. After I had accomplished my end I know now that I should have slipped into the first proffered seat and kept out of sight, since my position was a standing rebuke to those before me ; but really I could not bear the idea of accepting for myself what was not offered to one who needed it more than I."

"Miss Greyson, I admired your independent action, and now I admire your independent opinion. You are certainly right. I have been trying to defend a course which I felt was indefensible, to justify an act that was unjustifiable. My conscience had long since decided against me, but my reason still struggled and tried to stand upon a platform which in my heart I knew was untenable. That 'Golden Rule,' Miss Greyson, sweeps every other before it. We may talk learnedly of the duty of the conductor and traveller, but we are all neighbors, and this rule defines our duty to each other as such. As surgeons grow callous to suffering since they see so much, for the same reason a man constantly upon the cars becomes indifferent to the discomfort of others. We are quite inclined to shift all responsibility upon the conductor, to persuade ourselves that there are plenty of seats farther on, to assume that conductors are disposed to impose upon young men, and that, unless they assert their own rights,

nobody else will. Selfishness rules supreme upon the trains now-a-days, and it is delightful when one finds an exceptional case. Do you ever study character, Miss Greyson?"

"Yes, sir, I love the study, for I find it amusing and instructive."

"Were you studying character upon the Air Line that day?"

"I confess I was, Mr. Manning. I had heard that there was no better place for the study of human nature than in travelling; so, while I could not study faces, I was studying actions."

"Alas for me!" exclaimed the young man. "Is it possible for you, Miss Greyson, to attribute that one act of my life to thoughtlessness and not to innate selfishness and disregard for suffering?"

"Since I have become acquainted with you, Mr. Manning, and heard your expression of opinion, I find it easy to attribute it to thoughtlessness."

"Thanks to your generosity and nobleness, Miss Greyson, which finds it easy to forgive faults in others though it allows no excuse for what you call your own. Rest assured there was not a traveller on the Air Line that day that did not cringe under your gentle reproof and mentally resolve that he would be lacking upon no future occasion. From this time all the

lame, halt, and withered shall have seats enough and to spare wherever I am.

“ I hear my sister calling me. Please do not forget our engagement for to-morrow morning at sunrise. Each gentleman will, with the landlord’s help, provide a lunch-basket, so you need give yourself no concern upon this subject. With your permission, Miss Greyson, I will call at your cottage for you to-morrow morning.”

“ Thank you, Mr. Manning; it will give me great pleasure to accompany you.”

CHAPTER IV.

READING WORKS OF FICTION.

THE next morning, just as the sun was peeping above the horizon, a group of girls stood upon the hotel steps, and from the company could be heard the words in a slightly satirical tone,

“Sweet simplicity! unsophisticated country lass! beauty unadorned! I declare, Clara, your brother has very peculiar taste. I am sure I have been at the Springs every summer for years, but I have never seen that girl before. She does not belong to the fashionable world, that is evident from her dress.”

“Douglass says she is sensible, remarkably intellectual, and altogether out of the common run.”

“‘Out of the common run’ indeed! I declare, men are always on the lookout for something new, and are as pleased when they have found it as a child is with a new toy. ‘Give me something I never saw before,’ cries the child, and that is the cry of the men of this day and generation.”

“That girl has a lovely face,” said another;

"it is bright and fresh, nobody can deny that; and as to her dresses, they fit perfectly and are stylish if not costly. She is independent, too, for she finds her own pleasures, has never once essayed to join us, and indeed seems scarcely conscious of our presence. Another thing I have noticed, those who want her company must seek it. You can see that she is intellectual by the magazines she selects."

"Oh pshaw!" exclaimed the first speaker, "it is not much strain for one to hold a magazine before one's eyes. If I were to pose for a mental photograph I think I would select that graceful attitude, where art would be mistaken for artlessness and listlessness for intellect. A girl in gray, with a hat trimmed prettily in gray, a bunch of bright flowers at her waist, in that beautiful spot she has selected, gray shadow everywhere, the two bright things as high lights, her face and flowers, is a nice study for any artist. See, she has walked out upon the steps of their cottage; suppose we go over and introduce ourselves."

"No, let us wait," said Clara Manning. "There is Douglass going for her now. I am glad she will join us in our ramble to-day, for I believe we shall find her an acquisition. They are coming, and here are the other young men too."

Introductions followed. Olive Greyson had all of her life been accustomed to good society; besides, she inherited a refined, gentle nature and a love for all things good and pure. There was no embarrassment in her manner when she was thrown with more fashionable people than herself, but she was dignified and self-possessed, though perfectly affable. It did not once occur to her to be ashamed of the heavy dress, broad-brimmed hat, thick-soled shoes, and stout gloves she wore, while the others were attired in thin gay dresses and slippared feet. Suitability was what she consulted, and good sense had directed her apparel, which was most evident when, upon their return, many found themselves with torn, draggled skirts and wet feet, while she was as trim and neat as when she started out. Her exclamations of delight at the lovely ferns that met her in damp, shady nooks, the beautiful fields of daisies and wild orchids growing here and there, besides other flowers too numerous to classify, were refreshing. Her acquaintance with the nature of poisonous plants and vines was of great use, and her knowledge of botany and botanical names, while not displayed for admiration, came out naturally and irresistibly.

"Sometimes I have thought," Olive said to Mr. Manning, who walked by her side, "that if

our beautiful field-flowers were collected and cultivated by some eminent florist, they might rival those of foreign nations. See this insignificant-looking orchid here; what might it not become by cultivation! Have you ever seen a conservatory of orchids, Mr. Manning?"

"We have a conservatory at home, Miss Greyson, but I am no connoisseur in floriculture. Here is Clara. Clara, have we any orchids in our conservatory? Miss Greyson inquired if I had ever seen any, and I had to confess my ignorance."

"No, Douglass," his sister called back, "our conservatory contains only the commoner kinds of plants, geraniums, japonicas, heliotropes, and roses."

"Is the orchid a flower, Miss Greyson, or is it a class of flowers?" Mr. Manning inquired.

"It is quite a large family, Mr. Manning. Once I was in a conservatory which contained a large number of mixed orchids. I shall never forget my sensations as I gazed around me. It seemed to me that I was in a museum of butterflies and birds, and that they were all about to take wing and fly away. One was a lovely white, resembling a dove with downy pinions spread, and another was of a golden yellow, barred with brown, and it had even the antennæ and proboscis of a magnificent butterfly poising for

longer flight. These flowers looked like living things, not of petals and sap, but breathing, throbbing with the joyous life of winged creatures pausing for rest. The florist told me that there were many species of the genus orchid, and many varieties of each family. Some are raised in cool greenhouses, some in temperate, and some in tropical greenhouses. Some were gathered in Asia, some in South America, and I think some among the mountains of Europe. The conservatory in which I stood I was told cost \$500,000. Yet these are the wild-flowers of these foreign lands, clinging to dangerous cliffs and overhanging precipices, and are collected at great risk to life. Then they are brought to our country and cultivated till they become the very perfection of flowers."

"My mother would have listened to your description of these beautiful flowers with delight. I wonder we have known nothing of them. We really must order some for our own conservatory."

"They are costly things, Mr. Manning, a small root ranging from \$5 to \$10, and sometimes reaching \$5,000; and when it is put in its bed of rocks and moss it vibrates long between life and death, and often, after the tenderest nursing, your little fortune crumbles back to dust and the place thereof is known no more for ever."

"Then," said Mr. Manning, "I will leave them in the care of the florist; but I shall avail myself of the opportunity to visit the first orchid conservatory I am near, and shall enjoy it more after your beautiful description."

As this conversation was going on Olive and Mr. Manning were climbing a rugged pathway, aiming for a bold, rocky projection midway up the little mountain. Graceful firs drooped their freighted boughs all around, while stately and strong, tall pines towered, making the dark background for the tenderer greens of dogwood and sycamore, while tangled vines ran riotous, whose blossoms, like jets of flame, leaped from the darker coloring. A sweep of luxuriant valley lay beneath, and through the meadows a stream, like a silver ribbon, threaded its way, while the lowing of cattle and tinkle of bells added life to the beautiful scene.

"How perfectly lovely!" exclaimed Olive.

"It is, indeed," replied Mr. Manning. "I do not think I have ever beheld a lovelier scene." •

"Have you ever read 'Rasselas,' Mr. Manning?"

"You are thinking of 'The Happy Valley,' Miss Greyson, and in your imagination it lies before you."

"No, that was Abyssinian, deeply secluded, shut in by gates of iron, and where the spacious

halls were connected by private galleries or subterranean passages, where the columns had cavities filled with treasures known only to the royal line, where Rasselas was miserable, and when asked the cause replied, 'That I know not what want is, is the cause of my complaint; give me something to desire.' What misery that must be!"

"To know no want?"

"Yes, indeed. What a passive machine one must become whose every desire is anticipated!"

Mr. Manning had begun to take out the contents of his basket, and Olive spread a table upon a large rock; in this picturesque spot they ate their bountiful lunch. Continuing their conversation, Mr. Manning said,

"Speaking of 'Rasselas' reminded me that I interrupted your reading, the other day, a story which you said was founded upon historical fact. Do you not think the imagination is fettered when chained to facts?"

• "Doubtless it is, Mr. Manning; yet Scott and Miss Mühlbach are favorites of mine, and when I read them I feel that I am learning history and not wasting time, while this knowledge is conveyed through a very pleasant story of life in its various phases."

"Do you feel then that you waste time when you read fiction purely imaginative?"

“Oh if I should dip into all the fiction of this class it would indeed be an enormous waste of time. This is in truth the age of fiction, for the press is flooded with works of this class, most of which will have an ephemeral existence—will live through one edition, then die and trouble the world no more. I cannot condemn all fiction which is, as you say, purely imaginative, for in the best works of this class there is often great creative genius displayed, and grand thoughts and well-pointed apothegms are often interwoven amid the beautiful fancy. I enjoy the grand thoughts; I even enjoy the beautiful fancy.”

“You speak of the best books of this class; how do you discover these unless you sift fiction generally, Miss Greyson?”

“For answer, Mr. Manning, I will relate to you a little history. My mother’s mother was reared amid the gayety of Washington city. She frequented the theatre when Spencer H. Cone was one of the leading actors, and after he was converted and became a minister of the gospel, her admiration for his wonderful powers led her to attend his church. During one of the first meetings which Dr. Cone held, my grandmother was converted, and she was baptized by him. Throughout his ministerial career I doubt whether he had a more devoted

friend and ardent admirer, or a more consecrated member in his church, than my grandmother.

“Taking a retrospect of her gay life, my grandmother saw much to regret, and in her mind made solemn resolves for the future. Though still young, her place in the theatre and ballroom were for ever after vacant, her jewels were thrown into the mission-box, and from this time until the day of her death only a simple breastpin was ever worn. Possessing a romantic, poetic nature, and feeling convinced that the reading of fiction had been an injury to her by giving her a false view of life and its duties, she gave it up entirely. When my mother was a young girl, grandmother talked long and seriously to her upon the subject of fiction and expressed the earnest desire that my mother would never read a novel. No promise was exacted, but the expressed desire was sufficient. My mother was away at boarding-school for some time, and though yellow-backed literature lay all around, even upon the table in her own room, yet neither at home nor away at school did she deviate from her mother’s wishes. When my mother married my father she had read but one novel, and this was ‘Waverly.’ Grandmother consented to this through the intercession of a friend; but my mother said the

perusal gave her no pleasure, since she felt that she read it under a protest. My father took a different view of reading. He brought home the best books of the best minds, and he and my mother read and commented upon them together. Grandmother did not object now, and so the work went on. Even before I was old enough to have a thorough appreciation of good literature I was taken into the reading circle and we read together, and afterwards works which they had already read and approved were put into my hands for private perusal. I read nothing that my parents cannot recommend, but my happiest moments are spent reading with them, listening to their comments and criticisms and venturing a few myself. I have related to you a long story, Mr. Manning, but your question seemed to necessitate it. If all parents would take the trouble and pains to read for and with their children, fiction would soon be sifted to its dregs, and I am constrained to believe that only the best books of the best class would live, while all worthless literature would be entirely suppressed. The press would not issue unless books were bought, and no book would be purchased unless heartily approved by those into whose hands the training of young minds is committed. Do excuse me, Mr. Manning, for thrusting so much personal history

upon you; but the subject is one which interests me deeply and upon which I have expended much thought, so when you touched this string, you see, you had to endure a long vibration."

"I thank you indeed for relating this interesting history to me, Miss Greyson. I have been instructed and entertained, and feel that its recital has answered my question perfectly. Since your grandmother tried the two extremes, your parents avoided both and struck the happy and true mean. Your father has certainly shown great wisdom and sound judgment in his management of the troublesome question of fiction in the family, and I agree with you in believing that, were every parent to follow his example, literature would become a power for good instead of the poisonous food it often proves. You are fortunate indeed in possessing such parents, Miss Greyson, and the world would be richer and better were there more like them. Since we are upon this subject, tell me, please, what effect a good book has upon you; in what condition of mind does it leave you?"

"I am not sure that the writer would feel complimented were he or she to hear my reply, Mr. Manning, but since you have asked me I will tell you. The books I consider best do not touch my mind so much as my heart. I finish such a book reluctantly, look back, read a page

or two again, am sorry it is done, close the lid regretfully, lay it down upon the table, sit and think a few moments, then pick up life's duties again wishing 'Oh that I were only a better woman!'"

Just at this juncture sounds of footsteps were heard approaching, while a complaining voice cried out,

"Oh dear! My dress is torn into shreds, my face and my arms are blistered, and I am almost without shoes. I never could see the fun in rambling through slush and mud, brakes and briars, for a few common flowers, and I am sure I am farther from seeing it now than ever."

"Oh!" exclaimed her companion, laughing, "those trifles you mentioned are the perquisites of the occasion. Here, accept this alpenstock to aid you in surmounting these difficulties."

Discontented voices from below were heard clamoring to return, and Mr. Manning's cousin called,

"Douglass, the motion has been put and carried that we return to the Springs. I'm sorry to interrupt your pleasant tête-à-tête, but if you will look to the southwest you will see a strong argument in favor of the motion."

Mr. Manning arose, stepped upon a projecting rock, and saw a leaden mass of clouds rising steadily and determinedly.

"Oh I am sorry," he exclaimed, "but that cloud determines our course. We must turn our footsteps homeward, and that speedily too. Come, Miss Greyson, we must hurry, for my umbrella will be poor protection against this storm."

Scarcely had they reached the valley when the rumble of distant thunder was heard, and then the roar of rising wind and rush of coming rain through the forests. The little company, laden with field-flowers, ran for nearly a mile, when a few drops falling announced that the storm was upon them. Fortunately a wagon which had deposited its load of chickens and vegetables at the Springs came rattling down the road, homeward bound. The young men of the party succeeded in pressing it into service upon the promise of good compensation to the driver, and now empty crates and coops were piled up on the roadside and the party sprang in. There were no seats, for the driver himself was perched upon an empty coop, and the five couples stood, and steadied themselves as best they could, and under the shelter of umbrellas rode the last mile of the way. It was a bright, gay, laughing company that drove up to the hotel and sprang out amid pelting drops, and altogether Olive declared it a delightful close of a most delightful day.

CHAPTER V.

MAKING NEW ACQUAINTANCES.

“How far ought I to go, father?”

“My dear Olive,” her father replied, “your mother and I must leave this question for you to answer. You must consult your own conscience and bring your judgment to bear upon it, and this we believe you will do.”

“You know, mother, I determined I would not know these young people; for, in the first place, I did not think there would be any congeniality between us, and in the next I saw no prospect of improvement in their society, and I did in the course of reading I had marked out for myself.”

“But, Olive,” replied her mother, “you can and do read and study at home; and is it not better now for you to lay aside books, take exercise in the open air, enjoy your surroundings, even the company if you can, and give yourself in some measure to innocent diversion while we are here?”

“Mr. Manning argued with me in the same way, mother: that our natures require variety, and that it would be better for us not to pursue the pleasures we have at home, but to give loose

reins to the mind and body and touch books but lightly."

"There is reason in this, my child," added her father, "for while you are not here for your health, yet this is the place to improve your body, and this duty is imperative. We are triads, and the condition of our minds and souls depends largely upon the care we take of our bodies. I am sorry you have no congenial friend here. I hoped you might find one in this company of young people; since you have not, the question is for you to decide how far you shall cultivate the acquaintance of those who are here."

"This is the way I look at it," said Mrs. Greyson: "these young people are here, so are we. You did not seek their society; they really sought yours, or at least one of the party did, and through him you were introduced to his sister, cousins, and the rest of the company. An invitation was at once extended for you to join them in a wild-flower ramble, which you accepted and have seen no reason since for regretting that you went. Going so far, it is difficult to keep from going farther. Our duties are many and multiform in this life, and, while I am anxious for you to meet your obligations in one line, I am still anxious for you not to neglect your duty in another. I confess to you, what I have never confessed before, that I have seen

nothing in that group of young people to call forth my admiration. Their minds seem filled with dress and fashion, and their chief duty here seems to be to laugh ; and where so much laughter is, I do not think there is much solid sense. I may do them injustice, but this is my verdict from my standpoint."

"To a certain extent, my dear mother, you do them injustice. Some of these young people came to the Springs to have fun, and they are trying very hard to have it ; but really since I have become better acquainted I can see in many of them that this lightness lies only on the surface ; that beneath there are good sense and cultivated minds. I did them injustice myself at first, and I am glad to correct your impression. There is more in these apparently frivolous young people than at first appears. The young men are business young men, and are here for rest and recreation, and brought their sisters for company. There is Mr. Manning and his cousin Mr. Lansing, and their sisters ; then two lawyers, Messrs. Jones and Fleming, with their sisters, and their sisters' friend, Miss Ware ; and lastly the independent candidate for public favor is a young reporter for a popular and widely-circulated city paper. I learned these facts from Miss Clara Manning, also that they all belong to refined and cultivated families. While I

say this as explanatory, I must confess that they are all exceedingly gay in their tastes and very different from any I have ever associated with before and from any I would select as my intimate friends."

"I am glad you told us this, Olive," said Dr. Greyson. "I am always glad to know the good in people. When I see these young people I can't help thinking of a big preserving kettle, where the impurities from the sugar and impurities from the fruit rise to the top and froth and foam, and the acidity rises, bubbles, and puffs up a snowy surface, looking for all the world like a most delicate mass lying in great folds of tempting creaminess; yet it is but scum, worthless scum that must be taken off, every vestige to be brought up by fierce heat and removed by a skilful hand. Now I love life, and young people should be bright and happy, but there is too much scum in some of them, worthless scum that must some day come off and leave the pure unadulterated sweets at the bottom. Now, as I said, I am glad to know that beneath the frothy surface of these young friends there is something substantial and genuinely sweet; and I can see no harm in your cultivating their acquaintance, especially as we shall be here for so short a time."

"I suppose," Mrs. Greyson added, "that we

must not be selfish in our pleasures, and if we can impart any pleasure to those around us we ought to do it, for there are social duties required of us as well as others. But, my dear child, after all this discussion and talk you must decide for yourself how far you ought to go in your intercourse with these young people. I had a conversation with Judge Bell last evening in the parlor, and he said his wife and daughter had concluded to spend this week in Brooklyn; so it will be several days yet before they will be here, and on your account I am sorry."

"I am sorry too, for somehow I expected his daughter to be my one friend at the Springs, but now I must wait another week. Well, if the judge can bear it, so must I."

The Greysons were earnest Christian people. Olive had been converted when about twelve years of age, and was regarded as one of the most consecrated members of her church. Although so young, her influence was great in the church, Sabbath-school, and community at large. Were there suffering poor and sick to be visited or counsel and comfort to be bestowed, her pastor knew that for anxiety to do good, cheerfulness in assuming every duty, and success in accomplishing, Olive had few equals. Her piety was of a healthy sort, keeping her soul in a glow

of exercise. Religion with her was an everyday thing, not a garment to be put off and on as occasion required, but it was the air she breathed, the life she lived. Her judgment and tact were remarkable, her bright, sweet face a benediction wherever she went, and the sunshine she carried about was an honor to the Saviour she loved and served. Not once since she had been at the Springs had she neglected reading her Bible and praying, and her Sabbaths were either spent in her room reading to the little ones or some book for her own spiritual good, or her father hired a carriage and they attended service at a little country church a few miles distant.

After the conversation with her parents Olive mingled more with the young people; indeed they seemed to feel their circle incomplete without her, and after supper she now remained in the parlor an hour or two, for music or some innocent amusement, instead of returning to the cottage as she had done at first. Their circle had grown much larger, accessions being now constantly made to the visitors, for the intensely warm weather in the cities was driving the people to all the cool resorts.

One morning upon going up to the hotel Olive found an unusual degree of excitement among the young people, and it did not take her long to find out that a ball at some neigh-

boring Springs was in contemplation, and that invitations had been received by every guest. All the young people were going, and they were wild with delight. The gay season was now beginning in earnest. Balls at all the adjacent Springs would be given, and the usual courtesy extended from one watering-place to another; in course of time "our Springs" would return the compliment, and thus it would continue. Olive listened and smiled at the enthusiastic speeches, but further than this said nothing.

"Will you not attend, Miss Greyson?" asked Mr. Jones.

"No, Mr. Jones, I cannot go; but you will all have my warmest wishes that you may have a delightful trip and a safe return."

"Thank you, but we had much rather have your presence than all the good wishes you can heap up."

"Now, Mr. Jones, while I thank you, I must protest that you appreciate too little the only good thing I propose to send."

"Not Cæsar less, but Rome the more," was laughingly replied.

So they talked pleasantly of the matter, but no one inquired "Why?" With the girls it was,

"Oh, Olive, I am so sorry you cannot go."

The "cannot" implied impossibility, and this

they understood to mean that her conscience would not permit it, and all respected her convictions too much to try to argue her into compliance.

The ball was over and was the topic of conversation generally, though when Olive was present the young men very courteously found other subjects in which she felt more interest. A reciprocal ball was to be given by their own proprietor the next week, and it was discussed until the subject seemed threadbare. Great was the excitement, great the preparation for the coming occasion. Upon the eventful day Mr. Manning said,

“Miss Olive, I have a favor to ask you.”

“Very well, Mr. Manning, it will give me pleasure to grant you a favor.”

“May I have the pleasure of a promenade through the ballroom with you this evening?”

“You surprise me, Mr. Manning, for I did not suppose such a thing admissible. I thought only the dancers were admitted into the ballroom.”

“No such rule will be binding this evening. The doors will be thrown wide open to the public. I have my reasons for making this request.”

"May I ask, Mr. Manning, what your very best reason is?"

"Now you are laughing, Miss Olive, that a ballroom devotee should have a single good reason on his side. Listen a moment. I would not ask you to indulge in any pastime or frequent any place where your religious convictions decide otherwise. Remember, I said, 'indulge,' 'frequent,' which implies repeated action. You are a Christian woman and I respect your conscientious scruples. I profess to be a Christian too, but I try to be liberal in my views and intercourse with the world, and I hope I do not err, for I really believe I want to do right, if I can only discover what the right is. The young need diversion; we *must* have it; and I believe if Christians, instead of standing aloof and denouncing us, would bring their religion with them and enter into these diversions with us, the evil in them would be prevented. Remember your father's plan for 'fiction,' and consider whether this is not the wise course for Christians to pursue in young people's diversions: unite with them in their amusements, and if there is wrong attending them, then by precept and practice let them correct this wrong. How can Christians purify the world if they refuse to mingle with it? I am anxious for you to attend this ball with me to-night, and then I want your

candid opinion. I would not make this request were you at home where your example might influence others; but here nearly everybody will attend, and your presence or absence will effect nothing. What say you?"

Olive thought a few moments and then replied reluctantly,

"Under all the circumstances, Mr. Manning, and for the reason you have assigned, I will go with you, but only for a short time. No one admires beautiful costumes and flashing jewels more than I, and so far I shall enjoy the scene, shall imagine I am in some grand orchid conservatory where every wing is spread to soar—heavenward, shall I say?"

Mr. Manning's moustache twitched a moment and then he replied,

"Well, not exactly, I fear; but then you know we are to consider only the diversion as a necessity for the young."

"And whether the dance may not be Christianized?" Olive asked archly.

"I must confess," replied Mr. Manning with a laugh, "that the words 'soaring heavenward' and 'Christianized' sound rather incongruous in connection with a ballroom; but since you have consented to go, even though it be in a missionary spirit, I will forgive your little innuendo."

The evening could not have been lovelier. The grounds were literally alive with people, mostly strangers from neighboring Springs. At nine o'clock Mr. Manning, in full evening dress, appeared at the cottage to escort Miss Greyson to the hotel. Olive immediately made her appearance in simple white, natural flowers her only ornament. Soon they were standing in the ballroom door and Olive's eyes were dazzled by the novel scene. The dancing had just commenced, and the airy grace and poetic rhythm of motion were all there: beautiful women, handsome men, laughing eyes and rosy lips, dresses of matchless beauty and jewels fairly making rainbows in their flashing reflections. When had Olive ever witnessed such a scene! Mr. Manning watched her face as a tide of admiration and pleasure rolled over it; but it was only for a moment, then, with a sickening sensation, she turned and exclaimed,

"Oh take me back, take me back; this is no place for me! Not even is the door of a ballroom any place for a Christian."

They turned away, walked to the cottage-door, and parted without a word.

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE BALLROOM DOOR.

OLIVE found it hard to compose herself to sleep that night, and midnight found her wide awake and still in deep thought. She had been unprepared for the scene she had witnessed. She had expected elegant dresses, but was quite unprepared for bare arms and shoulders and so bare! Then she was totally unprepared for the familiarity allowed—women in the arms of men, embraces, which would be insulting in a parlor, submitted to because set to music! Her womanly modesty revolted, and she blushed that she should have been an eye-witness to such shameful proceedings. If Douglass Manning wished to show her that all arguments against dancing were unfounded, he had certainly taken the wrong course. She had not wished to pronounce judgment against a thing of which she knew but little, so had been willing to be a spectator that she might be persuaded that dancing had been abused without reason, that it was no sin, and that any church that discountenanced it was only trying to keep its young people in strait-jackets. Well, Olive had seen, was con-

vinced, and had now an argument more potent than any she had ever heard. Her cheeks were still tingling when her little alarm clock struck twelve, and when she closed her eyes it was with a feeling of gladness that she had gone and seen for herself; yet it was with a feeling of anger against Douglass Manning that he, a professing Christian, could countenance such an amusement, and was willing, nay, anxious, to subject her to such a sight; and she felt that it were better that their lives parted right here and that she saw him no more.

On awakening next morning her chagrin and anger had nearly passed away, and she was prepared to look back at the night before with a cooler, calmer judgment. She remembered that none of her friends had descended to the ballroom before she left; that Mr. Manning had said he had hurried down for her that he might station her at a convenient place, so she might see them and others enter; that it was a waltz the band was playing, so that it was the evolutions of a waltz the various couples were performing, and it might have been wives with husbands, sisters with brothers. Perhaps she should have waited and witnessed the promiscuous dance before pronouncing judgment; perhaps she had wounded Mr. Manning's feelings by turning off so quickly and showing him that he

had brought her to the wrong place. She was sorry, but it was too late to retract now; and even if husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, were waltzing together, nothing could excuse the style of dress!

Olive determined to remain in her room until all the strangers had left, and a severe headache made her the more willing to be alone. The grounds and hotel seemed alike deserted, for, since the dancing had continued until nearly day, all were asleep except the few who were neither participants nor spectators. First the gentlemen made their appearance, then one by one, at a later hour, the ladies, and it was noon before all of the strangers had gone. Everybody had a "gloriously good time;" everybody was "perfectly delighted" with the ball; but everybody felt a lassitude that each was willing to confess, and a total unfitness for exertion of any kind, even for much talking. After the afternoon nap every one felt brighter, and Olive, with the thought uppermost in her mind that she might have given occasion for wounded feelings, sauntered down to the spring where all of the young people had congregated, determined, if possible, to make amends for her quick act, but still to be her own true self and to be firm for Christian principle.

The young men had scattered over the

grounds to enjoy their cigars, but the young ladies were grouped together in a shady spot. As soon as Clara Manning caught sight of Olive she called out,

“Why, Olive, where have you kept yourself all day? One would have thought you would have been charmingly bright and rosy, that you would have shamed our pale cheeks and hollow eyes, and then you would have yourself stood a living argument against our favorite amusement.”

Olive had to acknowledge a headache and every one was sympathetic; but soon the conversation drifted back to the evening before, when Clara Manning remarked,

“I never waltz. Douglass would never consent for me to waltz, and he says he never will insult any woman by inviting her to do what he opposes in his sister. Then, too, I never dance a round dance; and as to the german, what would papa and mamma think were I to attend one! The square dance is all I indulge in, and I can dance that every night in the week and enjoy every set.”

A few agreed, but most of the young ladies disagreed, and so the matter of various dances was left undecided. The subject was a new one to Olive. She thought a dance was a dance whether it were a waltz, a german, round, or

square dance. Her conscience began to reproach her more than ever for her manner and quick decision the night before, and after a few pleasant words she turned, book in hand, to her old seat, thinking as she did so that it was not right to dance anyway, and if no other argument could be urged against it, the very condition of the dancers next day was enough for her, and she exclaimed,

“If this is not ‘revelling,’ what is!”

The sound of voices not far off startled her, and turning, she saw several young men seated upon a bench at no great distance, smoking.

“Fresh arrivals,” she heard Mr. Lansing say, and then Mr. Manning asked,

“Any one we know?”

“I think not,” was replied. “A dozen new guests have arrived, and among the names upon the registry I noticed those of Mrs. T. K. Bell and Miss Lottie Bell of Alabama; Judge Bell’s wife and daughter, I suppose.”

“Are you acquainted with them, Fred?” Mr. Manning inquired; but interrupting the reply Olive heard the quick tones of Mr. Jones’ voice asking,

“Is she pretty, Fred?”

“I declare, Bob,” exclaimed Mr. Lansing, “that’s the first question you always ask. With

you the *summum bonum* is a pretty face, I do believe."

"Partly no, but mostly yes, Fred; but why not confess the truth? I am a great admirer of beauty, and if ever I am a married man, you may depend upon it there will be a pretty face somewhere about. Why, I couldn't endure to face an ugly woman three times a day at my own table. Were I compelled to do it, I should rejoice when old age dimmed my sight, or, as I believe the wise man puts it, when, 'those that look out of the windows shall be darkened.' But," striking a fist in the palm of his hand by way of emphasis, "I tell you I will not marry any but a pretty woman; I'll live and die an old bachelor first."

"I know a young man," remarked Mr. Manning, "who actually married a beautiful face, and he has been wretched ever since. Beware of that woman who loves admiration!"

"Every dish requires its own peculiar condiments to make it savory," said Mr. Jones, "and beauty alone would be insipid. I want a beautiful woman who is totally unconscious of her beauty."

"Is there such a woman living?" inquired Mr. Lansing.

"Yes, many, I am constrained to believe," replied Mr. Manning. "I do not believe that

women generally love and crave flattery ; I believe it is the poorest, most vapid compliment you can pay a sensible woman. But, Bob, you do yourself injustice ; you are not looking for a beautiful woman, you want an angel, for I have heard you enumerate all the good qualities you want her to possess ; and above all things, you said, your wife must never be guilty of an unwomanly thing, and she must be a consistent Christian woman."

"Well, Douglass, yes, I want a womanly woman, of course I do ; yes, I want a Christian woman, too. To tell the truth, every ungodly man wants a Christian woman for his wife, and every ungodly woman wants a Christian man for her husband. Perhaps it is because we like our opposites. You know there is a law in nature that surfaces of unlike polarity attract each other. Who can be so trusted as a Christian? Who is so guided by laws outside of self as she? Who is such a positive character? Who so intent upon what is right, who so cheerful, who so loving, who so self-sacrificing, who so patient, who so brave, who so everything? There is nobody on earth before whom I bow so low as before a consecrated Christian woman."

"You amaze me, Bob!" exclaimed Mr. Lansing. "Any one to have witnessed your evolutions in the ballroom last evening—the finest

dancer upon the floor, as you were universally conceded to be—would have been surprised to have heard such platitudes from your lips.”

“Perhaps so. Oh I am always filled with disgust at myself and womankind after every ball I attend! ‘Why then attend?’ you are ready to ask. Because my forte lies in my feet, because I know I can dance well, because it is the thing I can do best, and because my vanity is gratified by the applause of people. Then there is another thing that sickens my better nature. Whom does the finest dancer upon the floor among the men select for his partner? Why, of course, the finest dancer among the ladies, to enhance his own triumph. And who is she? Oftentimes a woman I would n’t deign to notice upon the street, a coarse, unrefined creature, who has two active feet, a willowy figure, and nothing more. She is the one I select as my partner in the dance, and I put my arms around a woman I feel no respect for and away we go whirling off for the admiration of the public. I never fail to despise myself after a ball. I am naturally gay and fond of a certain amount of society, and I like to dance because there, if nowhere else, I am a success; but I tell you I have inwardly resolved never to marry a dancing woman.”

"Yes," said Mr. Manning, "but I'll venture you will be at the very next ball, even if it is followed by another 'reactionary storm,' as our weather prophets call it. You have n't had sleep enough, Bob, that is what is the matter with you. Here, try another cigar; I really think you need it."

"No, thank you, Manning, I need neither cigars nor sleep; it's a change of base that I feel has now become a necessity. If somebody would hand me a pledge to sign I'd be willing to put my name to it this morning that I'd never dance again as long as I live;" and with this startling declaration Mr. Jones walked over to join the young ladies. Olive's eyes followed him as he walked away, and her mind was filled with wonder at the conversation to which she had really been an unwilling listener. The next thing she heard was Mr. Lansing's voice saying,

"No, I am not acquainted with Miss Lottie Bell; indeed, have never seen her. I imagine that she is not strikingly beautiful, but I know that she is one of the noblest of women, and I am exceedingly anxious to meet her."

"What do you know of her, Fred?" asked Mr. Manning with interest.

"I know that her life has been an illustration of the total unselfishness of her nature, and if there is one trait in man, woman, or child

that I do admire above another it is unselfishness."

"Tell me what you know of her, Fred, that I may be ready to admire her too."

"What I know, Douglass, I learned through a friend of mine, a married gentleman, a near neighbor of the Bells, and I will tell you what he related to me. My friend said that Judge Bell was a talented man, that no man stood higher at the bar than he, that no man had more the confidence of the community in which he lives, yet that his habits had not been strictly temperate; in fact, that a few years back he was fast becoming a sot. They had a home in the village of G——, but were dependent upon the judge's position and practice for support. After he began to give way to his weakness he lost the judgeship, his cases in law became fewer and fewer, his debts greater and greater, and in a few months a heavy mortgage covered his home. Mrs. Bell began to sink under the trouble. Lottie, their only child, saw and realized their situation, and going to my friend begged that he would prevent the mortgage from being foreclosed until she had made an effort in her home's behalf. She obtained the village school, taught a large number of pupils, and taught them to the perfect satisfaction of her patrons; and out of school-hours she gave music lessons, for she

is an accomplished musician. There was the usual summer holiday for the pupils, but this girl took none, for she gave art and music lessons to a large class throughout the heated term; and at the end of the first year she paid \$600 towards raising the mortgage upon their home. Who would not wait upon such energy and determination as this? Nobody would press any claim against her father. A rich friend offered to lend her the remainder of the money, but she refused to accept any aid. One more year of hard work, and then she brought the deed for the place, made out in her mother's name, and placed it in her hands as her mother's for ever. More than this, she was the strength and comfort of her mother during these two years, a sunbeam at home, and a strong restraining influence to her father, and her gentleness yet determination proved his salvation. He is a sober man now, and his friends have conferred the judgeship upon him again since his successor's death left the position vacant. More than all this, when these troubles began Lottie Bell was engaged to be married to a young man who was regarded as worthy of the prize he had won, and who offered her a lovely home of her own; but knowing the condition of affairs she put off the marriage day, saying her first duty was to see her parents comfortable be-

fore she could seek ease for herself. I am told that he offered to raise the mortgage himself, but this she declined; and when he showed impatience and anger and insisted upon a speedy marriage, she at once dissolved their engagement. Not being able to admire such pluck and bravery, he left, and before a year was married to another."

"A romantic story truly!" exclaimed Manning. "I am glad we are to have the heroine among us."

"I think she would prefer to have none of these facts known, for she makes no claim to being a heroine, indeed believes she did only her simple duty and deserves no credit whatever for it. I hope to meet her, for already I feel a deep interest in her career."

"So do I. Such cases have peculiar attractions for me; they are as rare as they are interesting."

Olive had not lost a word of the whole conversation. She had done her utmost to chain her mind to the book before her, but it proved more refractory than ever before, and not a leaf had she turned, scarcely a word had she read. She did not feel like an eaves-dropper either, for the young men had her in full view where she sat, and their tones were quite loud enough to be heard distinctly without any effort upon her

part. She had been thrilled by the beautiful story. Judge Bell had hinted at nothing of this. He had only spoken in the tenderest manner of Lottie, and seemed anxious that Olive and she should meet. Now Olive longed to know her. "Surely," she thought, "here is a congenial friend, one trained in the school of trouble and affliction, who has stood its fires heroically and come forth, no doubt, purified."

Olive closed her book and went to the cottage to get ready to call upon Miss Lottie Bell at the hotel.

CHAPTER VII.

LOTTIE BELL.

THE conversation which Olive had just heard made her the more anxious to become acquainted with Lottie Bell. So impatient was she that she found it hard to wait until she supposed Mrs. Bell and Lottie were rested sufficiently to leave their rooms; but as she glanced through her window she saw Judge Bell and the two ladies walking towards the principal spring, and Olive hastened to join them.

"I was so anxious to call," she said as soon as introduced, "that I could scarcely curb my impatience long enough to allow you to rest a little after your journey."

"And I," said Lottie, "was equally anxious to meet you, for papa has prepared me for a very pleasant acquaintance."

"I don't know about that," said Judge Bell with a quizzical shake of the head. "I wrote Lottie, Miss Olive, that you were a very peculiar young lady indeed, that our acquaintance began with your offering her father a direct insult, which insult he very strangely apologized for. Then too I told her that you were not like the

girls around here, for I had not heard one word of slang or nonsense fall from your lips, neither had I seen you do one objectionable thing; that though you mingled freely with the people here, still you did not enter into their frivolity, that you held yourself distinct from others, and were in truth a very peculiar young lady."

"I am not sure, judge," said Olive, "that I see enough complimentary in your expression 'peculiar' to thank you for it."

"Oh," exclaimed Lottie, coming to the rescue, "papa intended the term as remarkably complimentary, Miss Greyson, for he is a great admirer of independence, and he assured me that I would fall in love with you at first sight."

"For your daughter's sake I forgive you, sir."

"I believe I am glad to make friends upon any terms," was replied with mock gravity, "for I always was afraid of these very peculiar people."

Olive laughed merrily as she slipped her hand through Lottie's arm, and soon they had wandered off alone and were intent upon each other. It was true, they had fallen in love at first sight. Lottie Bell's face would never have been called beautiful, yet had you seen it in a crowd your eye would have turned to it again, why you could hardly explain. There was about her a

total unconsciousness of power, a forgetfulness of self, which made her attractive. Her features had no beauty of regularity, yet they were pleasant. If her forehead was broad, her waving brown hair clustering above it made you forget its width; if her nose was prominent, you forgave it for the strength of character it suggested; if her mouth was large, you felt grateful for its size because of the display of beautiful teeth and for the sincere smile which played around it; while her dark blue eyes were bright and expressive.

Olive and Lottie soon found subjects in which they were mutually interested, especially music and art, and Olive drank in all that Lottie said of her work in New York, the lessons she had taken while there, what she had learned and accomplished, and all of her plans for the future. It was a delight to hear one talk so intently upon improvement who was so dissatisfied with what she had already done and so eager to press forward in the path of knowledge. Her ambition was irrepressible and infectious, and made one feel like starting with her in the race for perfection.

Olive introduced Lottie to all of her young friends in the parlor that evening, and two of the young men found her at once particularly attractive, and from this time all of the plans of

the young people included Lottie Bell. Notwithstanding these claims, there were many moments when the two girls wandered off alone, when they sat for hours conversing upon subjects of mutual interest, and these they felt the happiest of the twenty-four. One afternoon as they were walking together Olive said,

“Lottie, the afternoon you arrived I was sitting upon that rustic seat yonder under that large oak trying to read, when Messrs. Manning and Lansing took their seats upon the bench beyond smoking, and as they puffed away I heard a beautiful story, one that touched me deeply, and from that moment I loved you. They called you ‘a heroine,’ and in my heart I acknowledged that you were a heroine too.”

“Oh, Olive,” exclaimed Lottie, the color mounting to her cheeks as she spoke, “it would be affectation upon my part if I pretended not to know to what you allude; but did it never occur to you that some people have heroism thrust upon them even against their wills? Please do not think of me as a heroine, for indeed I lay claim to nothing of the kind.”

“If a heroine is one possessed of heroism, and heroism is ‘a noble devotion to a great cause and a just confidence of being able to meet danger in the spirit of such a cause,’ then you are a heroine. You certainly possessed every



quality, bravery, intrepidity, self-abnegation, fortitude—”

“Oh please stop! Who would not prefer to teach rather than have the house take wings from over your head, the very bread from your lips? I did nothing remarkable, indeed I did not. I am sorry this story has preceded me. I had rather be loved for what I am, not for what I may have done.”

“Can we not judge the character by the actions? I think this the safest means of reaching the true merit of a person.”

“So much is done in this world for policy, for applause, sometimes because one cannot help one's self, that the judgment is perverted and often misled.”

“But, Lottie, if the action is sifted the motive shows the character. I grant that it is not by one act or two that we can form a true estimate of a man, but it is the little things that are too trifling for him to notice by which we can judge him and which show his true character. You did a heroic thing when you undertook that school to raise the mortgage on your home, and it was a daily sacrifice of comfort and pleasure, a life of toil and hardships for those two years, I know. It was a noble thing you did for your dear mother, and your course was, no doubt, the salvation of your father. I admire the hero-

ism you showed; but, dear Lottie, more than this, I love you for the Christian fortitude, the Christian character, you displayed."

"Olive, my dear friend, your commendation troubles me. I do not deserve it, indeed I do not. As to the Christian fortitude and character displayed, I fear there was little Christian anything in what I did. That I profess to be a Christian after some sort of a fashion I do not deny, for my name is upon the church-roll at home; but I blush when I think how little my profession and my life accord. I worked for over two years to save our home, to pay my father's debts, to support my parents, and, while I succeeded in meeting these obligations, and through these efforts perhaps was instrumental in showing my father his weakness, in causing him to reform and become again a strong, steady business man, yet it was only love for my parents that made me do it, only the pride of a proud woman who could not brook to see her home seized by a creditor, sold, and occupied by another. Love me, Olive. I beg you to love me with all the warmth of your heart, but, while I crave this affection, I cannot bear to stand upon any pinnacle of perfection in your estimation, for that is not my true place. If you can love me as I am, notwithstanding my numberless faults, I shall rejoice, but do not

attribute any undue good to me, any Christianity in my actions, or you will deceive yourself."

"But, Lottie, you do yourself injustice, and I am going to believe about your past what I please, for I feel assured I know you better than you know yourself."

"Well, Olive, I have given you a friendly, honest warning, and if you are deceived, why then—"

"Yes, I will exonerate you from all blame; but tell me, Lottie, why you speak of your life as not corresponding to your Christian profession."

"Because it does not. I joined the church when I was very young, and at the time I thought I was changed, but I believe now it was merely mental excitement. My mother was so anxious for me to become a Christian, I think now I must have joined to make her happy; and then it was a good time to join, for ten of my young friends were going to unite with the church, and the time seemed so propitious I went forward and gave my hand too."

"But your experience, was it not considered satisfactory by your pastor and by the church?"

"My 'experience'! I did n't have any experience. Why, child, did n't you know that this thing of relating experiences has gone out of fashion long since?"

"But your pastor, Lottie, he had conversa-

tions with you, he was perfectly satisfied, I suppose."

"Why, my pastor never said two words upon the subject to me in his life, neither before nor since. He seemed very glad for us to join, for there were eleven of us, and the church voted us all in and we've been in ever since. And now I am going to confess something to you, Olive Greyson, which will startle you indeed. I have been a member of the church for six years, and if in all this time I have communed six times, I don't remember when they were."

"Why, Lottie! Does not your church arraign its members when they absent themselves from the Lord's table?"

"No, indeed. I never heard of one who was arraigned for this cause in my life. Why, Olive, in what corner of the world have you lived not to know that this kind of thing has gone out of fashion too?"

Olive's face expressed much, but Lottie was drawing upon the ground with the end of her parasol and did not see it. Presently Olive asked,

"What kind of a man is your pastor, Lottie?"

"Oh he is perfectly splendid; everybody loves him, he is so good and lovely; besides, he is very intellectual; indeed he is the most entertaining preacher I ever listened to in my life."

Then raising her head and looking Olive in the face, she added seriously,

“Olive, I am sorry I spoke lightly of these subjects, for I assure you I do not feel so. I spoke too of certain things going ‘out of fashion’ when I know that custom has nothing to do with religion. Our pastor came from a large city church, where his health had failed from overwork, to our little church. His views are very liberal indeed, and he believes in leaving much to individual consciences, for he takes it for granted that everybody possesses these inconvenient appendages; and while this liberality increases his popularity, I am not sure that I agree with him exactly in—. But no, I will not criticise my pastor. Now, Olive, while I spoke lightly of some things, I do assure you that my estimate of true Christian character is high, for I do not believe that any one admires genuine consecration more than I. At the same time I see no reason why we young people should be caged, and fetters placed upon us, to keep us from deviating from what old people would call Christian proprieties. The world is so beautiful I must be happy in it, and I intend to be just as long as I live. I do not believe that our Heavenly Father intended us to be throttled and manacled; I believe he loves to see us happy, believe he thought of this when he made

this beautiful world with every beautiful thing in it."

"So do I, Lottie; but does being a Christian make one less happy? It seems to me our enjoyment is increased by the thought, 'My Father made these beautiful things for me,' and especially when we remember that in the mansions above the 'heart of man' has never 'conceived' of the beauties awaiting us, his children."

"'Awaiting us'! Yes, when we die. Death is a terrible inconvenience; the thought is horrible to me! Ugh! I cannot bear it. Sometimes I sail on, and everything is fair and smooth, but suddenly the thought of death confronts me; then gone is the beauty of earth and sky, gone the perfume of the flowers upon the breeze, gone the happiness that was mine, and nothing but clouds, dark shadows, and death surround me! Life is so sweet, I wish there were only life. Death may do for the old and diseased, but not for the young, buoyant with health and hope, with high spirits and aspirations—oh surely not for us!"

There was a pause, and then she turned and in a tremulous tone said,

"Feeling as I do, do n't you know I am not a Christian? Christians have no fear of dying, but I have; therefore I am not a Christian. Is not this self-evident?"

“Your syllogism is wrong, Lottie; it is based upon a false premise. You assert that Christians have no fear of death. There is no reason why they should have such fear, but they are not exempt from it, and there are many of us to whom the thought is not pleasant. Some one has said that dying grace will be given us when we come to die, and not before; that it would be burdensome if we had to carry it about with us before we need it.”

“Oh, Olive, I am so glad you told me this; there is reason in it, and it comforts me. But go on; I interrupted you.”

“Well, I said your premise was wrong, for many Christians do fear to die, and because you fear it is no proof that you are not a Christian. It may be a proof, though, that you are not living up to your privileges as a Christian, and it is well for us occasionally to take a retrospect of our lives, to look into our hearts to see which occupies the larger space, our Saviour or the world; whether we have lived for him as we should have done, and whether we have tried to do his will in all things. Because we are Christians is no reason why we should n't enjoy ourselves in this beautiful world, why we should be throttled and manacled, as you say. Religion may have proved a sacrifice to some people, but it was none to me. I gave up nothing when I accepted

Christ, but the happiest moments of my life are those I spend in working for him."

A deep sigh from Lottie was the only reply, and for a few moments nothing was heard but the rustle of leaves overhead; but in another moment the silence was broken by the voice of Clara Manning calling them to come up and take a game of tennis. They went, enjoyed the game, agreed to go on another wild-flower ramble the next day, and for the twenty-four hours following Olive and Lottie saw each other only in a crowd.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FAREWELL CARD-PARTY.

UPON the evening after the above conversation Olive sat in her room at the cottage and thought:

“Lottie Bell is a Christian, I am sure, notwithstanding her doubts of the genuineness of her conversion when she joined the church. I have never seen a nobler, lovelier character. She is very humble and conscientious, will not admit any good in herself, and puts her motives down upon the lowest scale. Then, too, her estimate of Christian character is high; and because she does not reach her own standard she denounces herself and declares she was never converted. How tenderly she spoke of these things! How her lip and voice trembled! What a strange man her pastor must be! I am so thankful our pastor is old-fashioned in his ideas and practices, and that he keeps us all so busy working for the Saviour that we have no time for coldness and doubts. There is no telling what would become of me if he did not keep me constantly at work. Oh I cannot afford to stop! Poor Lottie! she misses so much by inaction. She has such an erroneous idea of religion, thinks it a hindrance

to real pleasure, whereas I think Christians ought to be the very happiest people on earth. This difference in our ideas is owing, I am persuaded, to the difference in the influence and teachings of our pastors. Oh I want to show her that a Christian can be bright, cheerful, and happy, and I will."

As Lottie sat in her room at the hotel she too indulged in a soliloquy, though it was somewhat shorter:

"Olive Greyson is the loveliest girl I ever saw. She is a warm, earnest Christian too, but she does not wear a long, lugubrious face, for she is bright and sparkling, the very life of every crowd she is in. Religion is certainly no burden to her. Were I called upon to pick out the happiest person of all these gay young people here, I should certainly select her. I have never before seen a person with whom I would willingly exchange places, but I really would change places with Olive if I could. It would be a bad exchange for her though. I am watching her; she is the study I keep before my eyes. Oh that I were only like her!"

* * * * *

As Olive walked into the parlor that evening these words arrested her attention:

"No, sir, I have no conscientious scruples upon the subject, but I am one of the few who

do not dance because I find no pleasure in the amusement."

It was Lottie's voice, but as Olive took a remote seat she did not hear Mr. Manning's reply. She had known that her friend did not frequent the ballroom, why she had never inquired; but she hoped her reasons were a Christian's reasons. She had seen her often at the card-table, and knew that she delighted in a game of cards, and now progressive euchre was the most popular game at the Springs. Olive had often joined the young people in what she regarded as innocent games, but she had held aloof from cards, though after Lottie came she often remained in the parlor during the game, waiting to take their usual promenade before parting for the night. At first the spotted cards were an object of aversion to Olive, but after watching the game an evening or two this aversion passed away, and, though only a looker-on behind Lottie's chair, she had upon these occasions caught the spirit of the game and watched it with all the zest of a player.

One afternoon one of the young men said to herself and Lottie,

"We are to have a grand farewell game this evening, in honor of Mrs. Stacey's last night with us, and we shall expect you both to favor us with your presence."

After supper, and the usual walk to the spring, all the gay people assembled in the largest parlor for the farewell game of progressive euchre, and the young men had ordered refreshments to be served later during the evening. Small tables were grouped about, around which sat the players, and everything was proceeding gayly, everybody was in the highest spirits and excited to the greatest degree. Olive and one or two others stood looking on.

For some time the playing continued and the interest was unabated, when at length a lady was summoned to her room, since her little boy was threatened with croup, and she arose saying she would be compelled to relinquish her "hand" to some one else. For a few moments it seemed that the game must be broken up, since no one could fill the vacancy, but with a sudden thought Lottie turned and said,

"Olive, here, take Mrs. Baskom's hand. You have watched the game enough to understand it, and are so quick I know you can already beat some of us experienced players. Don't hesitate; surely you cannot, under the circumstances. It will be really disobliging if you refuse, so take this seat right by me, and don't let our interesting game be broken up for the want of one player."

Olive hesitated, but entreaties came in upon

all sides, and finally she took the vacant seat and picked up the cards turned over before her on the table, but in her mind she determined to play this one game through and no more.

Refreshments were brought in, something that would not interfere with the game, fruit-cake and wine, so that they could eat and drink yet play on. When handed Olive she took a slice of cake, but declined the wine; which when Mr. Manning saw, he called the waiter and gave him some whispered direction. He soon appeared with a glass of lemonade dashed with claret, and, at a nod from Mr. Manning, placed it at Olive's side. Olive knew what the drink was at a glance. She had refused wine, and here it was coloring the lemonade, though but a fractional part of the drink. What should she do? A thousand thoughts flitted through her brain. Here was Mr. Manning, the young man who had been her fast friend at first, even until the night of the ball when she had wounded his feelings. She knew she had wounded him, because, though he had been very polite since, it had been a kind of freezing politeness, and she had been perfectly conscious of the iciness in his manner. He was a Christian too, and, while she thought there was great latitude in his views, still he seemed a perfectly upright and moral young man, and was doubtless a sincere, warm Christian. Then, too,

since hearing his sister speak of the various dances and her brother's opinion of them, she had felt sorry that she had turned away so abruptly, and no doubt she had done wrong in giving so severe a reproof to one who was without doubt a better Christian than she.

These thoughts went surging through Olive's brain while the piece of cake lay upon her handkerchief, the glass of red lemonade untouched by her side, and mechanically she shuffled and played. Others had eaten and drank and called for more. What should she do? In respect for her conscience, in deference to her principles, Mr. Manning had had a drink substituted for the wine she had just refused, yet was it right? Raising her eyes they met Mr. Manning's fastened upon her, full of inquiry, and then his fell upon the untouched glass, and with a quick impulse she raised the lemonade to her lips and sipped. After this cake and lemonade disappeared rapidly, and in the gayest spirits the card-party broke up, just as the clock upon the mantel chimed one.

In another week Dr. Greyson and family had bade adieu to the friends they had met at the Springs, and were then among the mountains of western North Carolina. Their visit to the Springs had been prolonged beyond their intention, but it had been so delightful they had found

it hard to tear themselves away. Olive parted with her friends with real regret; especially did she regret leaving Lottie Bell; but there were visits in contemplation which greatly softened the pang of separation. Only a short time was left for the mountain trip, two weeks at farthest, and now, according to recent arrangement, they were to meet a party of friends in "cloudland" upon the top of Roan Mountain. They remained a few days at the hotel upon its summit, then in private conveyances they visited all the peaks they pleased, took a leisurely ride through the romantic villages at their base, eating lunches by the roadside, drinking from every mountain stream that came gushing through iron tubes, icy cold and clear, sleeping in tents, breathing in the pure, fresh, sweet air, then went on through Asheville, Hickory-Nut Gap, by Chimney Rock, to a picturesque village to take the C. C. C. Road, and soon reaching the Air Line again, had a delightful ride home over this delightful road.

It was late Friday afternoon when the travelers reached the village of L—. How glad they were to get back! The children were happy to see the dog and kitty that "Aunt Nancy" had taken good care of in their absence. Everything was found in good order; fall roses were just beginning to don their richer robes, and

chrysanthemums to show the streaks of color in their bristling cups. Never had home seemed so attractive, and Dr. Greyson declared,

“It was a good thing to go away a while just to find out how sweet home is.”

Olive thoroughly enjoyed getting back to her own quiet room; but they had hardly time for quiet, for all day Saturday friends were calling to welcome the travellers home, and it was nearly sundown when their pastor came to add his greetings to the rest.

It was a bright, blue, crisp Sunday morning when Olive stepped into the Sunday-school room, and her five boys were there ready to give her a smiling welcome. They all loved her, and they were glad to have her back again.

“Did you have a pleasant trip, Miss Olive?” asked one.

“Oh yes, indeed, Jack,” Olive replied. “It has been a delightful summer, yet I am glad to get back, glad to see my boys again. Why, where is George Stovall?”

“Had n’t you heard, Miss Olive,” said Jack, “that soon after you left George’s aunt died suddenly, and that his uncle from M—— came and took George home with him, and he is there now, working in his uncle’s grocery and getting good wages?”

“Oh no, I had n’t heard it,” Olive exclaimed.

"I am so sorry! I would have been so glad to see George before he left."

"He left a 'good-by' for you, Miss Olive," Will Patterson said, "and he asked me to tell you that his one regret at leaving was that he would not have you for his Sunday-school teacher. He said, too, that if you could find the time he would be glad to receive a letter from you now and then, that it would help him so much."

"Oh I shall be glad to write to George. A boy in a big city like M—— has so many temptations to encounter. Yes, indeed, I shall write to George at once."

George Stovall was an object of especial interest to Olive. He was not only an orphan boy, but he had neither brother nor sister, all having died of diphtheria when it went through the village as an epidemic. He stood alone, the sole representative of a family that had once numbered six members. The only near relatives he possessed were an aunt living in Olive's village, and an uncle in M——. With this aunt he had lived until he was fifteen years of age, attending the public school in the village, for a little property had been left him from his father's estate, enough to give him a moderate education; but now that this was exhausted, and his aunt was dead, his uncle had offered him the position of clerk upon a fair salary.

The six boys of Olive's class were all about the same age, boys just entering manhood, and Olive felt the full responsibility of the charge. She constantly set before them the dangers besetting the path of young men, and the necessity for grace that they might have strength to overcome. Her teaching often took the form of practical applications, and these she fitted to the cases of the pupils before her. Other classes might be listless, looking around the room for objects of diversion, while the teachers of these classes closed their books and sat back awaiting the tap of the bell which announced the hour for recitation ended. Not so with Olive and her class. The hour for teaching was always too short for her, and the tap of the bell brought disappointment to both teacher and pupil. She had accepted this class under a protest, when they were left without a teacher three years before and the superintendent and pastor had urged her to take them. She had said she was too young and inexperienced to assume so grave a charge, but when the boys themselves sent her a written, earnest petition, she could resist no longer. Each Sabbath only convinced the superintendent and pastor of the wisdom of their selection. Olive had all the requisites of a successful teacher. She filled her mind full of the lesson in the first place ; then she prayed earnest-

ly over every lesson, for every pupil individually, and especially for herself as teacher; then she called into exercise her natural capacity to impart instruction, her aptness at illustration, and she studied to make the lessons a pleasure; yet she emphasized the practical truths so strongly that each face became solemn, and a spectator might well have imagined that from each lip was whispered the earnest inquiry, "Lord, is it I?" Once when the superintendent had requested each teacher to answer the question: "When is a Sunday-school teacher's work successful?" and drop the written reply in the hat at the door, without hesitation Olive wrote,

"When the pupils are brought to Christ."

And so Olive felt. Not only on Sunday morning did she try, but all through the week her boys lay upon her heart. If they were sick, she visited them; if she met them on the streets, she was always ready with a smile and pleasant word; and in her own room, upon her knees, they were continually remembered.

Two of her boys had been brought to Christ, and had dated their conversion to Olive's instrumentality. Four were still out of Christ, and she could not rest satisfied until all were within the fold. For George, the orphan boy, her heart ran out with intense longing. He had not been converted, yet she was sure he was not far from

the kingdom of heaven. She had seen his lip tremble with emotion, his eyes glisten with tears, when she talked of a Saviour's love, and she felt assured that George was almost persuaded to be a Christian.

When she left for the summer months George had gone out in the country for a few days on business for his aunt, so she did not bid him "Good-by," and now he had left the town, and she was troubled; but in only an hour or two a letter would reach him, she knew, so she determined to write him at once. Monday morning brought visitors and fresh duties; the unpacking of trunks and beginning life over again at home required time; and in the rush of company and each day's duties Saturday night whirled around so quickly that Olive in disappointment exclaimed,

"A whole week gone, and not a word to that dear boy yet!"

Among her first duties upon Monday morning she wrote to George, and the very next mail bore this letter away:

"L—, October 14, 18—.

"MY DEAR GEORGE:—I cannot express the sorrow I felt upon my return home to hear that you had left L—. I had not learned it until I went to my Sunday-school class; and when I

missed you and inquired for you, the boys told me you had left us, gone into the business world to begin life. How I wish I could have seen you once more before you went. I shall miss you so much ; we all will miss you ; but I shall feel the vacancy more than any one. You were always such a dear good boy, always such a regular, thoughtful, attentive pupil, and your bright, earnest face has helped me in my Sunday-school work more than you will ever know. I did not intend to wait so long before telling you this, but so many duties pressed upon my return, and the days flew so rapidly, I was scarcely conscious of the lapse of time.

“ Now what shall I say to my dear absent boy ?

“ First, go to Sunday-school every Sabbath ; be as punctual, regular, attentive, and helpful to your next teacher as you were to your last.

“ Secondly, remember all I have said to you in times past. Do not forget prayer and reading God’s Word. Keep out of the way of temptation, but if thrust upon you, be firm in resisting.

“ Thirdly, seek your soul’s salvation. Oh, George, rather than hear that you were an heir to millions of dollars, I had rather hear that you were a humble follower of the Saviour. Then you would be an heir indeed, the son of a King, a prince, a co-heir with Christ. Do not push

these thoughts from you, bear them about with you, behind your counter, at your work, everywhere, and let your soul find no rest until it is safe in Jesus' arms. I have prayed for your conversion long, yet the answer has been delayed, why I cannot tell. Though you are away, I shall still remember you at the throne of grace, shall beg that God in his infinite mercy will keep you from the evil that besets your pathway, the many temptations of city life; that he will mould you in his divine image, will make you a strong, healthy, stately tree in his spiritual garden. My heart has turned to you more tenderly than to any pupil I had, not because I did not see in the others nobleness of character and promise of a bright successful future, but because you were an orphan boy, left alone in a big, cold world to fight your way as best you could. Others had fathers to watch over and guide them; you had none. Others had mothers whose love and prayers would prove a safeguard; you had none. Others had brothers and sisters to cling to, to encourage, to stimulate by praise or warn by kind words; you had none. All alone you stood without one near family tie! I am justified in loving you better, in praying for you more earnestly, in watching your future more intently, and the circumstances of your life absolve me from every charge of partiality.

“Be noble, brave, and strong, but, dear George, above all things *be a Christian*.

“Write to me, express your feelings freely, and be assured that no one loves you more and feels a deeper interest in you, than

“Your devoted teacher,

“OLIVE GREYSON.”

CHAPTER IX.

TEMPTATION RESISTED.

THE reply that came was in a boyish hand and was diffidently expressed, but it was full of thanks at the interest felt, and it reiterated Olive's wish that soon he might be numbered among the people of God. Had Olive read the words only, she might have been disappointed at the reception of her warm letter, but beneath the careful words she could see a boy's timidity warring with his suppressed emotions.

Already George had been in M—— six weeks when Olive reached home, yet in none of the home letters she received was the death of his aunt and his leaving mentioned. It was only a boy leaving one home for another, and no one thought it necessary to mention the fact to her, never dreaming that such a trifling circumstance would be of vital interest.

When George received her letter he went at once and joined the Sunday-school, but the teacher made none of the forcible appeals, the practical applications, that went home to his heart as Olive's had done; indeed, his new teacher seemed to feel his duty performed when he

asked the questions in the "Quarterly," and if these consumed the full time of teaching he felt fully satisfied with his morning's work. The result was that George lost interest in his lessons, and would gladly have spent his time somewhere else, had he not felt bound by his promise to Olive to attend. Conversation was carried on between the boys notwithstanding the teacher was asking the questions, for as only one boy was expected to answer at one time, each held his book up ready for his turn, but in the meantime talking behind it to his next neighbor.

"George," whispered Ned Winters behind his book, "papa says he thinks you are a good boy and he would like me to associate with you; suppose you come out to our house this afternoon, and I'll give you a sail on our fish-pond. You know where we live, don't you?"

"Yes, I went around once with my uncle's delivery clerk and saw your place. What a beautiful home you have, Ned! I shall be glad to come when I can, but I hardly think Sunday afternoon the proper time for a sail."

"Oh but we will sing some Sunday-school songs first in our back-parlor, and sister Genie will play them for us. Mamma always likes us to sing Sunday afternoons, and we most always do. You have n't anything to do especially, I know, and your cousin Will is n't at home to

keep you company, and, as Sunday-school libraries seem to have gone out of fashion, you have no nice book to read, so come, wont you?"

"Thank you, Ned, I think I will. My Sunday afternoons have been very dull since I have been in the city."

The boys' turn to answer had come around again, and they paused in conversation long enough to answer "No, sir," or "Yes, sir," and then Ned continued:

"Don't say you think you will, George; say you'll come without any think about it. If you don't come you'll be walking around the streets for fresh air and exercise, and coming out home you'll get both; and if singing Sunday-school songs isn't good Sunday work, I'd like to know what is. If your conscience is too tender to sit in our boat and let the wind ride you up and down a little, all right, we'll sit on terra firma and talk; but, to save my life, I can't see the difference between riding on your own fish-pond and riding on somebody else's street-cars. Say you'll come, George, and come about half-past three, wont you?"

Just then the bell tapped for the closing exercises; the boys joined in the closing hymn and then went out.

It was with a thrill of delight that George started after dinner for his friend Ned's home.

Col. Winters was a rich banker who preferred a home in the suburbs away from the din, rattle, and dust of the city, where he could enjoy country life, its green meadows, orchards, and vineyards, with horses and Jersey cows, large vegetable garden, fish-pond, and plenty of space for fresh air and plenty of earth to raise his corn and clover. Col. Winters was a Christian man, and his family, though rich, never forgot their duty to their Heavenly Father. Their main carriage horses were always allowed to rest the entire Saturday so that they could do good service upon Sundays, for morning and evening the entire family attended church. Distance was never an excuse, neither were threatening clouds; indeed, it took something very unusual to make this family absent themselves from the house of God.

As he had passed in his buggy to and from the city, Col. Winters' attention had been attracted by George's industry in his uncle's store, and, stopping often for some purchase, he was struck by his politeness to customers, gentlemanly bearing to all, and his close attention to business. These qualities in the make-up of a boy he knew would insure success in the man. A compliment from him was a compliment to be prized, and George appreciated it; appreciated too an invitation to the home of this Chris-

tian family, and the willingness expressed that he should be the associate of his own son.

The first Sunday afternoon was delightfully spent in singing and conversation, and altogether George thought it one of the most pleasant afternoons of his life. After this many Sabbath afternoons were spent at Col. Winters', and George always received a warm welcome from every member of the family circle. Ned made no further proposals to sail, finding his friend decidedly opposed to boating on the Lord's day.

"I cannot understand how it is, George," said Ned one day, "that you are so firm in your principles, even as consistent as a Christian in your every-day life, when you have had no home training at all, for I have understood that your parents both died when you were a little fellow."

"I know but little of my parents, Ned, but my aunt, to whose care I was left, was a good woman and tried to teach me what was right. I owe a great deal to my aunt's training."

"Yes, but she was a widow and had no children, and I hardly think she knew how to raise a boy, for I think boys need a peculiar kind of training. Now a girl is different; she can just grow up good; there is nothing to make her anything else. There's my sister Genie;

she is perfect. Why I should as soon look for a storm under a blue sky as for her to do anything wrong. You see girls have no temptations until they grow up young ladies, and if they have been trained right at the start, they will not have any trouble resisting the pleasures of the world, which are their main temptations. Genie will never be other than she is right now, yet if you were to talk to her about herself she would tell you how wicked she is; but you know her kind of wickedness does n't amount to much."

"Oh but sin is sin, Ned, whether it be in Miss Genie, or in us, or in the most wicked of men. Your sister is a Christian, but you may depend upon it she has her temptations as well as you or I. I grant that boys are tempted more than girls, because they go out into the world, see more of its wickedness, and have to battle for themselves. Girls are hedged in on all sides; still they have their own wicked hearts to contend with."

"But boys have these and the world too."

"Yes, boys begin to be soldiers early, and we have some tough fights, too. You spoke a moment since, Ned, of my training, and wondered at my firm principles. I believe, before I came here, I had the best Sunday-school teacher in the world. I am not saying anything against

our present teacher, for he is a nice man, no doubt, and very intellectual, so every one says; but I am not referring to him, only to my dear Miss Olive. She did not want to take our class of six boys, but our superintendent begged, and we sent her a written petition, and she finally consented. A married gentleman had been our teacher, but he moved away, and when we saw Miss Olive, so young, so beautiful, so lovely, we wanted her, but only because of these reasons.

“Oh, Ned, she was a teacher, I do assure you. She felt the full responsibility of us boys and it seemed to weigh upon her every Sunday—I might say all through the week. I am sure she prayed for us constantly. She used to say a Sunday-school teacher’s mission was to bring souls to Jesus, and if this was not done she was a failure. How she labored for this! We did not learn history, either ancient or modern, in our class, neither did we have entertaining anecdotes of great men to chain our attention, but in every lesson she showed us Christ; she brought him out so clear, so beautiful, the one thing of all things to be desired, and the old, old story sounded so strangely new, so wonderfully sweet, from her lips, that our eyes were always dewy when we listened, as hers were when she talked. Many warnings she gave us about the temptations of Satan, of the world and its allure-

ments, of what it takes to make soldierly qualities in a soldier and in a boy, and clearly she pointed out our weakest points, the gaps in the wall where our enemy could assail us most successfully. I shall never forget her words; none of those six boys will ever forget them. Two became Christians, and how happy she was, but how she longed and prayed for the rest of us! Miss Olive has done much towards my right training, Ned. I owe very much to her. I hope I inherited some firmness of principle from my parents, but apart from this and my aunt's training, whatever is good in me is due to Miss Olive. I believe she is the best Christian, counting ministers in too, that I ever saw. Sodom would not have been destroyed had she lived in it, for I believe that for one such righteous soul as Miss Olive the Lord would have spared it. Oh no teacher lives like Miss Olive, and there are few Christians like her."

"How comes it, George, that she didn't make you a Christian with all her good teaching?"

"She would be shocked to hear you speak so, Ned, for she has no power to make Christians; but she certainly did all she could, both by example and precept. I only wish I were as good as I know she is."

"I only wish we had a teacher like Miss

Olive now, George, we might be Christians too if we had. I don't think our teacher realizes what it is to be a Sunday-school teacher. Why as to that, I can remember how the different teachers of the different classes look, sitting back when they are through with the lesson, smiling at everybody with such a self-satisfied air, as much as to say, 'I have served the Lord for to-day and am free.' They gave attention to his work for about—well, perhaps twenty minutes—and that they think the extent of their duty. I only wish we did have a teacher like Miss Olive, don't you, George?"

"Yes, Ned, but then a great deal of the fault may be in us, for if we felt more interest, perhaps our teacher would too. I've often heard it said that 'the pews make the pulpit.'"

"How's that, George?"

"Why, I've heard it said that as are the pews so is the pulpit: if the hearers are listless the pulpit will be without any inspiration."

"Oh I think that is six of one and half a dozen of the other, for interesting preaching makes interested hearers."

"Yet the reverse is true too. Suppose, Ned, you and I go to work this week, study our lesson thoroughly, select all the points that interest us most, talk about them next Sunday to our teacher, and if there are any points we do not

understand, let's question him upon these too, and see if we cannot start a new order of things in our class."

"All right, George, this pew is ready to improve the pulpit. I'll begin my lesson to-night."

CHAPTER X.

KEEPING A PLEDGE.

MR. STOVALL'S grocery, where George stayed, was a wholesale establishment and did a large business. Several doors above was another of like character, kept by Messrs. Ross and Foster. During the sickness and absence of one of Mr. Stovall's clerks, George and his cousin Will, who had now returned, had been sleeping in the rear room of the store, and as some of the "Ross and Foster" clerks were taking a holiday, the two sons of this firm also occupied the back room of their father's grocery, and these four boys were naturally thrown much together. A little supper had been given by the boys, first in one store and then in the other, of crackers, sardines, and cheese, these articles being taken from the different stores with their parents' consent. At length, when Mr. Stovall's clerk returned to take his place, the Ross and Foster boys determined to give the Stovall boys a fine farewell supper. Heretofore they had spread their suppers upon the top of a barrel with a brown paper for a table-cloth, but now they were actually going to have a table-cloth, knives, and forks

which they had brought from home. It was quite an elaborate affair that was to be given ; but not until business hours were entirely over, not until the city clock had tolled out ten, did the Stovall boys walk over for the farewell treat.

"Come in, boys," called out Joe Ross when they made their appearance ; "let's begin without ceremony."

"What a royal supper !" exclaimed Will Stovall.

"That's just what we intended it should be," said Jim Foster.

Then they began to dish out raw oysters, for they were necessarily raw, since they did not know how to cook them ; but with vinegar and Worcestershire sauce they made out very well. Next came sardines and canned turkey, and these with crackers and baker's bread they devoured with a relish. A part of the last course had been kept concealed as a great surprise, but the time had now come for the curtain to be lifted and the third act to be played, so Jim Foster, with quite an air of mystery, walked over to a dark corner and picking up two shining bottles of champagne, set one on each side of the pound cake that decorated the middle of the table. So great was the surprise that for a moment it seemed that Will's and George's breath was taken quite away ; but while they looked all the

amazement they felt, they said not a word. Joe and Jim enjoyed their surprise and laughed heartily. At length Will Stovall said,

"I declare, fellows, you overpower us: first a good supper of substantials, and now cake and champagne!"

"Yes," Joe replied, "we wanted to wind this thing up in fine style, and knew nothing better for our purpose than champagne. Hurrah for the man who invented champagne! Will you pop the cork, Jim?"

"I accept that honor," said Jim, beginning to unwind the tiny wire that confined the cork.

All this time George's face was a study, but none of the boys had noticed it. Now the cork flew out, striking the ceiling, and the sparkling champagne began to overflow. Will's glass was filled and another was pushed towards George, but he said gently,

"No, thank you, Jim. I believe I prefer this water."

Jim was holding the bottle over another goblet, but stopped pouring, so aghast was he at George's speech.

"What! refuse champagne, George?" he exclaimed. "You surely cannot mean it!"

"Yes, Jim, I must refuse it," George replied carefully but coolly. "I am under a pledge not to touch anything of this kind."

"Did n't know we had one of the wishy-washy temperance-pledgers among our neighbors," said Joe with a sneer.

"It was your mother made you promise, I suppose?" Jim asked with a rising inflection.

"No, Jim, both of my parents died when I was a little fellow. I have not actually signed a temperance pledge, but the promise I have made I feel to be as binding as a pledge written in black and white."

"Oh if it is only a promise," said Joe more pleasantly, "that is brittle and can easily be broken. I have heard that rash promises should always be broken, and it was certainly rash to promise never to touch champagne. Come, think better of the matter, George; be a man, and decide for yourself whether it is right or wrong."

"Yes," continued Jim, "I do not say with Joe, 'Be a man,' but be a gentleman, and decide what is the most gentlemanly course to pursue. If you refuse, you insult our judgment and consciences and generosity. I suppose it is hardly the proper thing to do to talk of prices in this connection, but these two bottles were the crowning expense of this occasion; and we thought champagne would be a capital thing to wind up an oyster supper with, to render it digestible, to warm us up, and make us sleep well afterwards.

What are you afraid of, man? Not that champagne will make you drunk, surely!"

"No, Jim, it is not that; it is the beginning of the habit I fear; but apart from this, I've promised."

"Many church members drink champagne, George," his cousin added.

"That may be, Will, but *I* cannot. Please let us drop this subject and talk of something else. If you boys see no wrong in it, why drink away, as you are doing. I shall enjoy the cake with this glass of clear cold water far better."

The sipping and the eating went on a few moments in silence, and then Joe said,

"George, my curiosity is excited, and I want to know to whom you made that rash promise, if you don't mind telling."

"Not at all, Joe; it was to my Sunday-school teacher."

"Pshaw! is that all?" and Joe's face was the picture of disgust.

"Joe," said George, laughing good-naturedly, "don't get so upset by one glass of champagne. I certainly have enjoyed this nice supper, and sincerely thank you and Jim for your kindness, and feel highly honored that you should have remembered us so generously, but please don't let us spoil a delightful evening by unkind feelings at its close."

"So I say, Joe," said Jim. "If George prefers water to champagne, why let him drink it; water is cheap. Don't let's have any more words about it, but let the evening wind up as pleasantly as it began."

"There'll be the more champagne for the rest of us," said Will, as he turned his glass up to his lips and drained the last drop.

"Oh but this thing does not suit me at all," replied Joe decidedly. "It is a reflection upon the rest of us, and I verily believe we are just as good, just as sober fellows, as George Stovall. In my humble opinion it was a silly thing in a Sunday-school teacher, whether man or woman, to exact such a promise, and sillier still it was in that boy who was weak enough to make such a promise."

"Who was your teacher, George?" Jim asked, willing to turn the conversation, seeing it was becoming so very unpleasant.

"She was a Miss Greyson, Jim, daughter of Dr. Greyson, of L——. Joe would never call her 'silly' did he know her. She saw in her class of boys six men who would some day go out to battle with the world, and every Sunday she tried to draw such pictures of success and failure as we would never forget, telling us we were soldiers, warning us to fight manfully, and that our greatest enemy was our own hearts. Her tem-

perance talks were frequent, for she saw that drink was a terrible thing, and that the habit once formed held with death-like grip, and that a man once a drunkard seldom reforms. She talked to us of 'prohibition,' 'high license,' and all the plans that good men are originating to correct the terrible evil, and she showed us that if *each man* would resolve never to touch a drop of anything spirituous, there would be no need of any other measure; that this would be far better than even a national prohibition. Her class promised to begin the good work, and we solemnly pledged her our words as honest boys that we would become six sober men. Oh, Joe, if you only knew how pure, sweet, and beautiful she is, how earnestly she works for her Saviour, how hard she tried to put into our minds lofty resolves to be, with the help of God, noble Christian men, you would have looked up to her as the loveliest of her sex, you would have listened to her counsel, you would have loved her."

"Are you a professor of religion, George?" asked Jim.

"No, Jim, I am sorry to say I am not a Christian. Some of our class were converted, but I was not one of them. I tell you, Jim, that I would give everything I possess were I only like Miss Olive."

"'Miss Olive,' 'Miss Olive Greyson,'" repeated

Jim thoughtfully; "that name sounds familiar to me. Let me see, I think I heard my father speak of a Miss Olive Greyson, but it cannot be the same, still the name is not a common one. Father and mother were at some springs in Virginia a while this summer. I wonder if they could have met her."

"Yes, I expect so," said George, "for Dr. Greyson took his family on some such trip. I came away before she returned, but I have received two lovely letters from her since I have been here. I will show them to you boys some time."

It was getting late, the supper was over, though one bottle of champagne had not been opened. The two Stovall boys arose to leave, expressing warm thanks for the delightful entertainment and many regrets that their evening work at the store was now at an end. Everybody was in good spirits except Joe. A cloud rested upon his face and his manner had lost its usual cordiality, but George hoped that by morning his good nature would be restored and that they would continue to be the good friends they had been before.

CHAPTER XI.

A SAD DISCOVERY.

THE boys met the next day, but Joe's manner was still reserved, and it was evident to George that the wound of the evening before had not healed.

"I am sorry," George said to himself, "but I must do what is right regardless of others' feelings. I tried to be gentlemanly in my refusal, tried not to notice the hard things he said, though I felt my face flush with anger. I could not help remembering what Miss Olive had said about ruling one's spirit and 'taking a city,' and because I knew how self-control would please her I calmed myself, swallowed the angry words that kept rising, and passed his speech over in silence. Perhaps my motive should have been higher; yes, I know it should; yet I am sure when I follow her teaching I follow her Saviour. I wish I could say *my* Saviour, but I cannot yet claim him as mine. I am sure she prays for me, for my safe keeping, for my conversion, and it is a comfort to feel that I am remembered, to know that my name is constantly repeated to God and blessings begged for me, though so un-

worthy. I trust in Miss Olive. I verily believe she is the best woman on earth."

There is no telling how long this soliloquy might have gone on, as George leaned against a sugar barrel with his eyes fastened on the floor, had it not been interrupted by the entrance of Joe, who came up to him and said,

"Come over to-night, George, as soon as you can."

"All right," George replied, glad to see that Joe had lost the coolness of the morning. As soon as he could he walked over to Ross and Foster's, wondering what was the matter; but no one was present but Jim and Joe, no sign of any supper about, only George saw the bright label of the champagne bottle shining under a shelf; and the more he thought the more his wonder grew. Joe's manner was rather more cordial than usual, but George took no notice, accepted the chair offered him, and conversation went on upon ordinary topics, till finally Jim said,

"George, did n't you tell me that your Sunday-school teacher's name was Miss Olive Greyson?"

"Yes, Jim, that was her name."

"Was she the young lady you spoke of in such exalted terms, who made you six boys promise never to touch wine or liquor of any kind?"

"Yes, Jim, it was the same one."

"I told you last evening, George, that the name 'Miss Olive Greyson' sounded very familiar, that I thought I had heard my father speak of her, and I asked him last night. He said yes, he had met her at the Springs, that she was a beautiful, attractive young lady, that he had never seen one who had interested him more; that she was unusually bright, had a musical laugh, large brown eyes, waving hair, a clear, rosy complexion, and pearly teeth. Is that the one, George?"

"Yes, that is a photograph of my teacher, and I am glad your father met her. She is all he described her to be and more too."

"That is your Miss Olive, is it?"

"It certainly is, Jim."

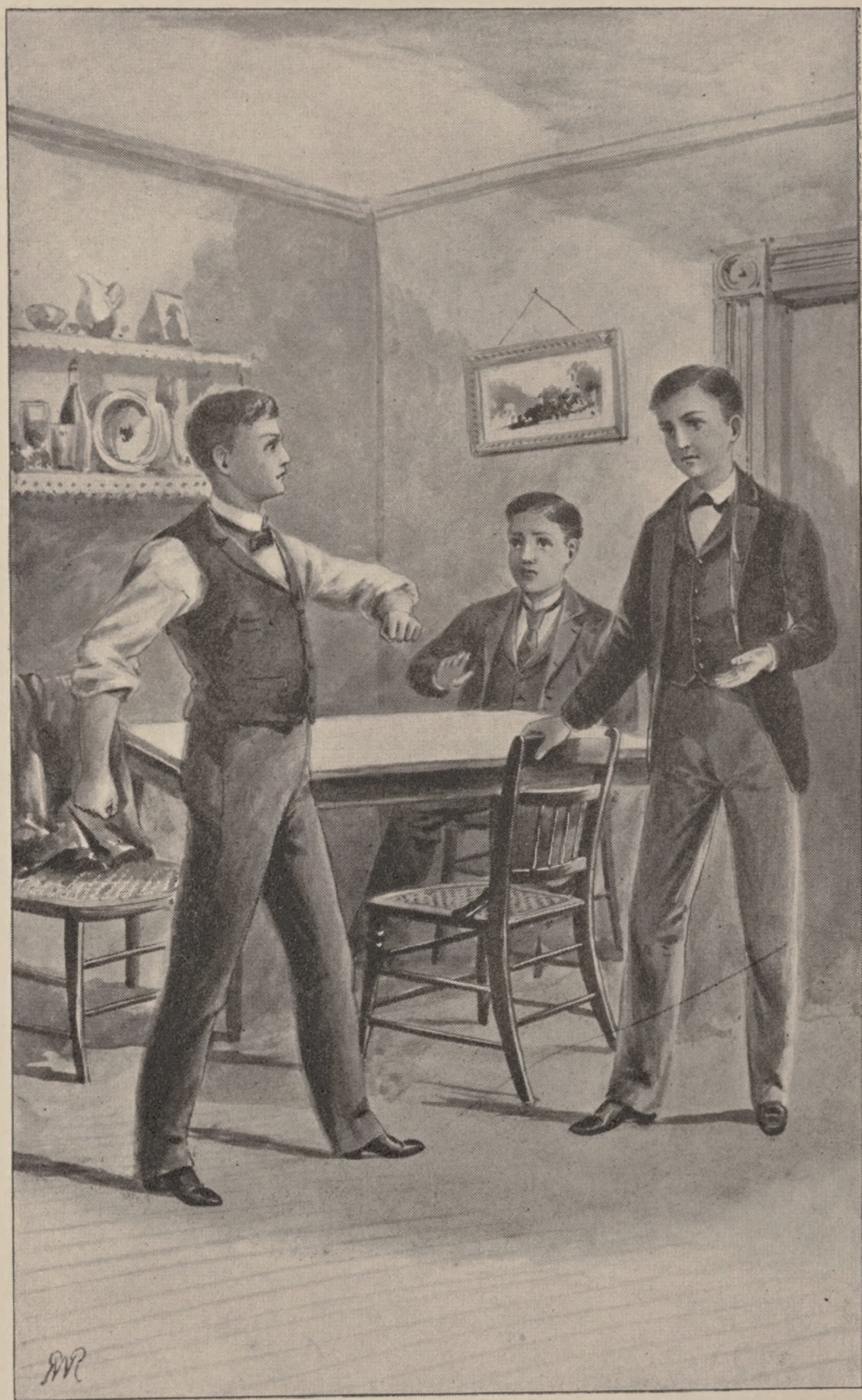
"Well, my father says he watched her as she played an exciting game of cards and drank wine between the deals."

The words came slowly, and when the period was reached George's face was white, and springing to his feet he called out,

"Say that again! Say that again!"

The selfsame words were repeated, and then clenching his fists and rolling up his sleeves ready for a fight, he cried out,

"You dare to say, sir, that my Miss Olive sat and played cards and drank wine! It's



false, it's a base fabrication, it's a lie of the deepest dye, and I'll whip the man who dares to utter such words about her."

"Be calm, George," said Joe; "don't get so stirred up about such a trifle."

"'Trifle,' indeed! It's no trifle, sir, to defame so angelic a woman. It's no time to be 'calm' when such a Christian's character is assailed, a Sunday-school teacher whose words were as pure and holy as heaven itself, who you say has fallen so low as to play cards and drink liquor. I'm ready to defend her, sir, against young or old, the son or the father, it matters not which."

A policeman passing, hearing loud voices, rushed in,

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed. "A fight, hey. Come, young man," laying his hand on George's bare arm, "you must come with me if you can't cool down."

Joe declared that no fight was imminent, that it was all a mistake and would soon be explained away, so, dropping George's arm, the policeman reluctantly walked out. Poor George! He had sunk into a chair in an agony of feeling, and it was pitiful to see him. Even the boys were sorry for him, for until then they had had no idea of the hold that this teacher had upon his heart. At length Joe said soothingly,

"It must be a mistake, George ; this cannot be your teacher, although the names coincide exactly ; but then it is not impossible for your Miss Olive to have a cousin with a similar name. Such things do happen sometimes, and it would be nothing so remarkable after all. You do not know her father's name, do you, Jim?"

Jim drew a slip of paper from his pocket as he said,

"For fear of a mistake I asked my father for that Miss Greyson's father's name, and he gave these initials, 'Dr. L. M. Greyson, of L——, Ga.'"

George bent his head down upon the table and his strong young frame shook with emotion. The boys pitied him, yet they glanced across his bowed head and a smile passed between them. At length he raised up and said in an altered tone,

"Jim, forgive me if I was rude a moment ago. I felt that you were dashing my idol of perfect Christian womanhood to the earth and shattering it to pieces before my eyes. There is some mistake, boys, I am sure of it. I do not doubt, Jim, that your father saw one Miss Olive Greyson play cards and drink wine, but," striking the table with his clenched fist, "*it was not my Miss Olive*. I am as sure of it as though I had been there and seen for myself."

“You can speak to my father about it to-morrow if you choose, George,” said Jim.

“No, Jim, I shall write at once to Miss Olive. I shall write her this very night, and put the plain question to her; and if she did—alas for George Stovall!”

CHAPTER XII.

A LETTER AND ITS EFFECTS.

IN a few hours Olive Greyson received the following note:

“DEAR MISS OLIVE:—While at the Springs this summer did you ever play cards and drink wine?

“I do not believe it, but wish the denial to come directly from you.

“Your affectionate pupil,

“GEORGE STOVALL.”

Olive held the little sheet in her hands a moment, and then burst into a flood of tears.

“O God,” she cried, “what shall I say to that dear boy! How can I admit to him this one false step!”

Refusing supper, she paced the floor weeping and praying alternately until the night was far spent. After many efforts, which were thrown aside, she finally finished a letter to George which seemed to satisfy her. It covered several pages, and after a long explanation she wound up the letter with these words:

“..... I do not excuse my course; nothing can justify it, and I am not trying to do it now,

only I cannot consent to let this letter go without these words of explanation. And now, dear George, your two questions are answered. Yes, I played cards and drank wine.

“My dear boy, I had rather make this confession to any one else than to you. I have talked to you boys so much upon these two points, and now to think that I, your teacher, should have fallen so low as to be guilty of both sins! Surely in that evil moment I must have depended upon my own strength and not upon my Saviour. God only knows how I have repented with bitter tears, and how gladly I would do anything to wipe that ten minutes out of my life. But alas! it is there, a black blot that cannot be effaced. Oh would that I had remained at home and taught my Sunday-school class, and not gone away for the summer! What shall I say to my boy! Dear George, pray for me, your sinful, weak teacher, and try to forget these two acts of her life, and remember only the precepts she has tried to teach you, how she still prays for your soul to be anchored safely on Christ, the eternal Rock.

“May my Heavenly Father shower his richest blessings upon you, and keep you in the hollow of his hand, is the prayer of

“Your sorrowing teacher,

“OLIVE GREYSON.”

How needless all these words! Only six did George see. His eye skimmed along the lines until the words were reached, "I played cards, and drank wine," and then the letter was crumpled in his hand and dashed behind a barrel in the corner of the store. This act as much as said, "Explanation, justification there can be none." For a few moments he stood lost in thought, and his uncle had to call him twice to wait upon a customer, and his manner was so abstracted that his uncle reproved him for it afterwards.

Poor George! His idol was truly dashed to the ground and shattered! Had not the words burned before his eyes in her own handwriting he would never have believed them possible; but now there was no mistake; he could doubt no longer. All the afternoon when at work his manner was listless, his gaze vacant, as though his thoughts were miles away from his body. As soon as business hours were over he walked over to Ross and Foster's, and going into the back room said to Jim and Joe,

"Well, boys, I have come to help you empty that other bottle of champagne, if it is not gone already."

"Heigh ho, George, what has come over you to change so suddenly?" said Jim.

"Well, Jim, you know I told you I would write

to my teacher and find out the truth of your father's assertion. Not that I doubted him in the least, only I could not believe that it was my Miss Olive, the woman who was my model in all things. Oh she was the pinnacle of perfection before whom I bowed! It is all over now. She has fallen, and because I raised her so high the fall has been the greater, the more terrible. I feel now that I shall never put trust in any one again. I wrote her asking but two questions, and her reply reached me this afternoon. I can doubt no longer, Jim: it was my Miss Olive your father saw, the beautiful, fascinating woman, the warm, earnest Christian—she it was who played cards and drank wine. And now, boys, I said a night or two since that I only wanted to be as good as she. If she played cards, so can I. Bring out the spotted things; I will learn. If she drank wine, so will I. Bring out your champagne and let us drain the bottle dry. Ha! ha! ha! No more warnings for me, no more life of self-restraint. From this time on I am my own master; nobody's precepts shall fetter me."

The two boys looked at George with amazement. His face was deeply flushed and his manner excited as though with fever. They both had taken an occasional game of cards and drink of champagne, but since the supper and George's firm refusal to touch either, they had

begun to think seriously of quitting both; for despite their jeers, his upright and manly course had filled them both with respect. Several days had passed since the supper, and still the champagne bottle with its red and gilt label stood under the shelf, but not so far but George's eye caught sight of it. Here was the model boy, the Sunday-school pupil who had rolled up his sleeves to defend his teacher with blows from charges preferred against her—here he stood with flashing eyes calling for cards and champagne, declaring he would learn the one and drink the other. Truly here was a transformation, and for a few moments Jim and Joe were speechless with wonder. Unwilling to yield without a word, Jim said,

“George, had n't you better put this thing off till to-morrow night? Joe and I were thinking seriously of stopping these bad habits ourselves, and through your example; but if you are going to turn on our side there will be nothing left for us but to keep right on. Come, George, let's all quit and turn over a new leaf. What do you say?”

“No, sir,” replied George with emphasis, “I am surely going to turn over a leaf, but it's a leaf backward. I don't see any use in trying to be good and abstaining from evil, if Christians, those way up on the ladder to heaven, can do

such things as drink and play cards. With all the Bible before them, the grace of God in their hearts, and all the light they have, if they can be guilty of such things I am sure such a sinner as I cannot be expected to keep on in the straight way without deviating. I've tried long enough to do right, and now I am going to quit trying and go my own way. An example has been set me and I am going to follow it closely. Good-by to good resolutions now. Hand out the cards and champagne, boys; I think you will find an apt scholar in George Stovall."

"Hadn't you better think about it, George?" persisted Jim. "You are excited to-night; perhaps you will repent to-morrow morning."

"No, Jim, I've quit such foolishness as repenting. Hand out your bottle, I tell you. If you don't I shall go to the first saloon and get something stronger, for I tell you I'm bound to break my promise to-night, for I'm desperate and ready for anything."

It was strange how reluctantly the two boys brought out their cards and bottle and set them before George. Somehow they felt that a noble life was about to be wrecked, and they had come to the conclusion that while such things might be tolerated in themselves, in such a good boy as George they were positively wrong. George grasped the cards eagerly, anxious to learn to

play, and with a steady hand carried the glass to his lips and drank. Jim and Joe touched the champagne but lightly, but George drained the bottle dry, and when the evening was far spent he arose with a flushed face and unsteady step, bade his friends 'Good night,' and went home.

CHAPTER XIII.

STEPS DOWNWARD.

OLIVE watched the mail intently, hoping for a response to her letter ; but though weeks passed, none came. Uncertain as to its reception, and anxious to know, she wrote again ; but no reply came to this second letter written. Her friend Agnes Maitland lived in the same city with George, and she wrote to her ; but she could only tell her that in Mr. Stovall's store she had often seen a handsome boy moving energetically about, and upon inquiry she had learned that it was Mr. Stovall's nephew, but more than this she could not tell. George then was in the city, he was still with his uncle, and must have received her letters, but she could not account for his silence.

Never in all of Olive's life had she prayed so much and so fervently as she had since her return from her summer outing, never had she so much felt the need of prayer. She had prayed in bitter tears for forgiveness, and believed that her Heavenly Father had looked in pity upon her and pardoned her weakness. It was a comfort to her that the five boys of her class knew nothing of her misstep, and more earnestly than ever

she talked to them of resisting temptation, not yielding for a moment, of the importance of being always on the alert for Satan. Her one great tearful regret was that George knew. He was such a strong character too, so independent and sturdy, all alone in the world, standing like a strong young oak, bending before the wind, but only bending. She counted upon him in the world, she knew his strength, his inflexible purpose, his brave determination to do his whole duty in life; and now how could he bear weakness in one he leaned upon, one in whom he implicitly trusted? What effect would her weakness have upon that orphan boy? These were questions constantly before her that would not be pushed aside.

In her Sunday-school lesson for the week these words pierced her like a dagger:

"In matters of right and wrong no hair's breadth of concession should ever be made, and none can be made without giving up all. In this world full of urgent voices calling on us to do wrong, our safety is in absolute refusal."

Again, a writer speaking of Pilate, said:

"He stands as a terrible example of the wickedness which may come from weakness, and of the danger of trifling in the smallest degree with the strict lines of duty. Since we know so little of what may be the issues of our acts,

we should give the more earnest heed to keep their motives pure, lest, like this man, we should do worse things than we know."

While Olive is writhing under the lashes of her conscience, let us look again at George.

He had been working hard in his uncle's store night and day, and feeling weary upon the night he went to Ross and Foster's, he had found the champagne pleasant, its effect delightful. At first he was satisfied, since he had defiantly broken his promise, and for several days he exulted in the thought: as, however, the heated term continued, he began to think that a little stimulant prudently indulged in might prove a good medicine, a tonic his system needed; so small bottles of wine were secreted about his uncle's store and sipped as occasions presented themselves. But wine was too costly, and when he complained at the saloon where he purchased, it was suggested that a much smaller amount of whiskey would answer, at a much smaller cost. Whiskey was bought, but the first flask weighed so heavily upon his heart that it was several days before he could persuade himself to touch it. From the afternoon when Mr. Stovall saw George reading a letter when he seemed so abstracted that he had to call him twice before he could get his attention, he had noticed a change in his nephew. He could not account

for it, but feared he was on the verge of a spell of illness. Lately he had observed an unsteadiness in his walk, and fully assured that George needed medical attention, he determined to send him home early and summon his family physician. Needing some tool which had been misplaced, he determined to find it himself and not call upon George, who, he persuaded himself, was sick. Rummaging in an old barrel of rubbish for the missing article, what was his utter amazement to find a small flask of whiskey, half of which had been used! Almost paralyzed with astonishment and grief, he stood revolving in his mind what course to pursue, and then he stooped down, replaced the flask, and put the rubbish back, forgetting to look further for the tool he had been wanting. He knew the truth now. It was not disease, but drink, that was the matter with George.

Mr. Stovall was a wise man. Not a word did he say to his nephew until he had retired for the night, and then he went to his room, sat by his bedside, and in the dark began stroking the boy's head affectionately, saying as he did so,

"George, my dear boy, I have felt worried about you lately, for I feared you were not well, and I intended to send for Dr. Preston to-night that he might prescribe for you."

"I am not sick, uncle; I do not need medical

advice; indeed I think I have felt better than usual lately. Please do not trouble about me, uncle; you have enough to care for without my adding to your burdens."

"But, my dear George, I cannot help troubling about you. You have changed lately, my boy. I thought it was due to sickness, but this afternoon in the rubbish of an old barrel I found—what did I find, George?"

Truthfully the answer came, without a tremor of hesitation,

"A flask of whiskey, uncle."

There was a silence of several minutes, and in the darkness Mr. Stovall pushed the curls back from George's brow slowly and tenderly, and then said,

"Yes, my dear boy, that was what I found, and I cannot tell you how shocked I was. How long has this been going on, George?"

"About two weeks, uncle; never before."

"Did you know, George, that your father fills a drunkard's grave?"

"Oh no, sir!" and George sprang up and sat upright in bed. "Uncle, is it true that my father was a drunkard?"

"I am sorry to tell you this, my boy, but your father, my dear brother, lived and died a drunkard."

"Oh, uncle, I did not dream of this! There

was always a mystery about my father that I could never unravel. Aunt Mary was always ready to talk of my dear mother, said no lovelier woman ever lived than she, and she has pictured her to me so often; but when I asked about my father she always sighed and grew silent."

"Your aunt Mary was your dear mother's sister, and she knew her troubles as a drunkard's wife. My brother loved his wife and children with deep devotion, but he could not burst the thralldom of drink, and after years and years of struggling he died in delirium-tremens. They had lost every child but yourself from diphtheria, and finally your dear mother laid down her poor aching head, folded her tired hands, and went to heaven. Will you follow your father, my boy?"

"Oh no, uncle, never! Oh I thank you so much for telling me this sad story."

"I would not have exposed your father's weakness except for your good, my dear boy. He was one of the noblest, most generous, most talented men I ever knew; but his thirst for drink was insatiable. I never saw a man struggle harder than he did to conquer; but when he found his business gone, that friends had lost confidence in him, he sank under the overwhelming mortification, drank deeper to drown his wounded pride, and died. Be warned, George, by the

sad fate of your noble father, and let liquor in every form alone. You cannot afford to tamper with it."

"Oh no, indeed, I cannot. Thank you again, my dear uncle, for telling me all this. I must, I will, let the dreadful stuff alone."

"Remember, George, that there are hereditary taints of various kinds in many families, and in ours there may have come down through a long chain of ancestors a love of strong drink. Beware that this hereditary love descend not from your father to his son. I am a firm believer in heredity. If diseases, talents, family characteristics are transmitted, so also can this love for drink, this craving for a stimulant, descend from one generation to another. My dear boy, let it alone now and for ever. Tell me, has Willie ever touched liquor in any form? Your aunt and I have always been so particular never to have anything of the kind in the house, and she will not even flavor her sauces with wine lest this hereditary love may be developed: but tell me, George, did you ever know Willie ever to touch anything of the kind?"

"For my cousin's good I will tell you this, uncle. An evening or two before he left for college, Jim and Joe gave us a supper and they had champagne. At that time I refused to touch it, but Willie drank with them. Afterwards I

drank champagne myself, and this was the beginning of my downward course."

"Oh, George, my boy is in danger! Thank you for telling me this. I must go at once and write him a letter of warning. Good-night, my dear boy. God bless you," and bending over, his uncle pressed a warm kiss upon his forehead.

CHAPTER XIV.

LIQUOR AND CIGARETTES.

"WHERE have you been these several Sundays past?" Ned asked George in Sunday-school the next Sabbath. "I have missed you so much. Have n't been sick, have you?"

"Well, no, not exactly, yet I have not been very well. A fellow that has to work as hard as I do all the week does n't feel like being cooped up in Sunday-school and church the whole of every Sunday."

"I thought you enjoyed coming to Sunday-school. It has been fine lately, George, our teacher has become so much more interesting since the pews have shown more interest. I am so glad you told me about that. The other boys are beginning to ask questions too, and last Sunday our teacher tried the Chinese method of teaching; that is, he turned pupil and we were the teachers, and we drew out all of the truths of the lesson by asking him questions. It was so nice. I tell you it was, and we all enjoyed it. He says he is going to try this plan once in a while just to test our knowledge of the lesson. I hope you have some good questions to ask to-day, George."

"No, Ned, I haven't any. The truth is I haven't looked at the lesson. I only came to get a Quarterly and find out which the next lesson is."

"Coming out to our house this afternoon?" Ned whispered again.

"Perhaps so," was whispered back.

"What's the matter with you, George? you seem so indifferent to everything."

"Am I? Well, perhaps I am."

"Just listen to that again. You sound to me as if you were going into typhoid fever. It's an awful disease, and they say there's a great deal about just now. You'd better see the doctor, George, and right away, too. When anybody's sick at our house, Dr. Gillyard feels the pulse and says, 'The secretions are locked up.' Now I don't know what that is exactly, whether it's as dangerous as typhoid fever or not, but I shouldn't wonder if that was the matter with you. Come out this afternoon and let mamma doctor you; she's the best doctor in this city for light cases, such as I hope you've got. Will you come, George?"

"Yes, Ned, I'll come, but I do not need any doctoring though."

The Sunday-school proved unusually dull to George. He did not ask or answer any questions, but all the class were fully awake to the

lesson, and his silence and moodiness were not noticed, or if noticed, were not commented upon. The morning service would have proved particularly interesting to any one whose mind had not been preoccupied. The music was inspiring, the sermon a rare treat, an able discourse on "Love," so full of apt and beautiful illustrations, so full of tender entreaty, that not only was every eye intent upon the speaker, but tears were there, telling that the emotions were deeply stirred.

In the afternoon George turned his steps towards Col. Winters'. He had not been there for some time, and he did not as usual walk up the front walk like a man and ring the door-bell. Instead, he crept along by a high fence, hoping to catch a glimpse of Ned, and he did not wait long before Ned walked out upon the front veranda and looked down the street to see if he were in sight. George called him, and Ned ran out and invited him to come in.

"I can't come in this afternoon, Ned," he said.

"Oh yes, George," Ned insisted. "Genie has bought some new Sunday-school song-books, and they have such lovely pieces in them. Come in and let's sing some of them. Genie is at the piano now."

"I cannot sing this afternoon, Ned. I have a cold and am entirely too hoarse to sing. I will take a stroll with you, if you like, but I can't

come in this afternoon. At some other time I would be glad to try the songs, but not now."

"Where shall we go then?"

"Down to your fish-pond, if you like. I have never been there, you know, and am anxious to see it."

"All right, only I thought you objected to going down there once, preferred to go in the house and sing Sunday-school songs."

"To sailing, yes, but not to sitting in the boat and talking while it is tied to the shore. I love to sing too, but like to vary the order of exercises, you know. Oh what a lovely fish-pond! I never saw such beautiful water-lilies before, and there are so many varieties. What a splendid place! Let's sit in the boat yonder and enjoy these beauties while we talk."

They took their seats, and after talking an hour Ned exclaimed,

"Why, I came near forgetting something. We had syllabub and cake for dinner, and mamma set aside two glasses so you and I could have some after we sang a while. As you have a cold and don't feel like singing, I will go in and bring the waiter out here."

"That was certainly very kind in your mother, Ned; please return my very sincere thanks to her."

Across the lawn came Ned, a dainty waiter in

his hands holding two goblets of frothy syllabub and a plate of beautiful cake.

"What a treat this is!" exclaimed George. "I don't know when I have tasted syllabub before."

"Does n't your aunt have it?"

"No, she is very strict about such things, will not put a drop of wine in her sauces, and of course never has syllabub. This is perfectly delightful."

"Mamma is very temperate, too, but she does n't feel it important to be so awfully strict as that. She always uses the wine she makes from our own vineyard, and I do n't think home-made wine ever does any harm. I must confess that sauces without any wine flavoring taste very flat. You don't disapprove, do you, George?"

"Not at all, Ned. I think your family are models in everything. I would follow them blindly without a single question, and I believe they are right upon the wine question. To prohibit entirely makes one want to do the very thing prohibited: this is human nature, and you know if the bow is strung too tight it will fly back the other way. I hate to oppose my opinion to uncle's, when he is so good too, but I think they are rather too strict, and believe your parents are just right."

"I am glad you think so, George, for I believe

it too. Now, there's mamma, she would never offer a glass of even home-made wine to anybody, for we never think of using it as a beverage. She makes blackberry wine and cordial for sickness, makes grape wine too, and uses a little in flavoring and syllabub. I carried a glass of syllabub out to our driver, old Jerry, the other day. He used to love his grog, but keeps sober here, for he knows he couldn't hold his place a day with us if he drank. You ought to have seen him bowing and scraping his thanks; and holding it in his hand a minute, he said, 'Little master, you kin have all the "syllly" if you'll jest leave ole Jerry the "bub" at the bottom.' "

The boys laughed, and George said,

"That was the wine at the bottom the old man loved, and to tell the truth, syllabub would be nothing without it."

By this time both syllabub and cake were gone, and the boys were chatting away, when suddenly George put his hand in his breast pocket and drew out a bunch of cigarettes.

"Why, George!" exclaimed Ned in great astonishment, "I did n't know you smoked!"

"I do n't, except cigarettes; they are not anything much. Try one yourself, Ned, and you will see that they are nothing more than the leaves we little fellows used to smoke and call 'rabbit-tobacco.' "

"They look so pretty, I feel inclined to try one, but what about the breath? Wont that tell on a fellow?"

"I always put some of these silver-coated pellets in my mouth after smoking, and let them melt slowly, and this entirely destroys the odor. You can try one if you wish."

Ned took a cigarette in his fingers, twirled it about in an uncertain way, and finally accepted a match, struck it, lighted the end of the cigarette, gave a puff, and cried out,

"This is stylish! It's fine; I like it. How fragrant they are!" Puff, puff, puff. "I'm afraid to smoke a whole one at first. Heigh ho! what's the matter with my head? It feels so funny. I must quit. There, mine has gone down to the bottom of the pond. I wonder what makes my head reel around so. I feel as if I were tumbling over."

"Lean your head over the boat and bathe your head in the water; it will be all right in a moment."

"Give me some of those silver-coated things, quick, George; I think I hear somebody coming. Whew! what would mamma and Genie say if they knew I'd been smoking!"

"If you think they would object you had better not smoke any more, Ned. Nobody has ever told me not to smoke cigarettes, nobody

but Miss Olive, and she does things worse than this."

"Why, George, you told me she was perfect."

"I have found out better since then. Have the pellets melted?"

"Yes; now see if you can smell my breath."

"Not a particle, would never know you had been within a hundred miles of a cigarette. Is your head all right now?"

"Oh yes, I'm steady now. My head felt queer, though, I tell you it did. I don't believe I was ever cut out for a smoker."

"You would soon get used to it, as I have. Why, I can smoke one cigarette after another and never feel it; but, Ned, if you think your parents would object to your smoking, you had better let cigarettes alone. No one has ever forbidden me to use them, and I shall keep on. It is my money I spend, and if there is any harm in cigarettes, then it is my health I injure, so no one has any right to say a word."

"I heard papa say one day, George, that the use of tobacco excited a thirst for something stronger, and there is tobacco in these cigarettes, so you had better mind what you are doing."

"Precious little tobacco there is in these things; not enough to hurt a baby. I'll run the risk of the thirst for liquor, Ned. If I never do worse than smoke a little innocent cigarette or

two, I'll be a saint. Don't let me influence you, though; do as you think right and as your parents would have you do, regardless of me."

"Papa has an exalted opinion of you, George. He says he had rather I would have you as my friend than any boy he knows, and mamma and Genie are so glad for you to come here Sunday afternoons. They say they feel sorry for a boy without any mother or father, without any home, in a city like M——."

"I thank all your family for their interest in me and the kind welcome I always receive from them. I assure you, Ned, however I may appear, I do thoroughly appreciate it, and trust none of you may ever have reason to regret your friendship."

"Regret it! Of course not, George. What are you talking about! What has come over you, anyway? You always were so strong and had so much self-respect—mamma called it self-assertion, that's the word—that it made everybody acknowledge your manliness and independence. Now I am two years older than you, but papa says I lack some qualities which you possess in an eminent degree, and one is, you think for yourself and act for yourself. He wants me to cultivate these qualities, but I don't know how to go about it exactly. He says I am not independent enough, that I am too easily influenced.

and that he fears for me unless I have the very best associates. How came you to have so much independence and self-reliance, George?"

"A boy alone in the world, Ned, is forced to be independent and self-reliant. If I do n't think for myself, who will? You will always have somebody to stand by you and help you fight your way through the world, but as for me, I stand alone without money and without friends. Uncle is as kind as he can be, but he has his own children to look after, so I cannot expect much from him."

"But, then, George, you have already had good training. You know there was your aunt, and then I have heard you say that the appeals and warnings of your Miss Olive had more effect upon you than—"

"Let's stop there, Ned; it is getting late and I must be going."

George arose hastily, said it was time for him to leave, sent thanks to Mrs. Winters for her treat, and promised, if possible, to come again the next Sunday afternoon to try over the new Sunday-school song-books which Genie had purchased.

CHAPTER XV.

TEMPTATION YIELDED TO.

THE conversation with his uncle had made a deep impression upon George. The history of his father's life and death clouded his spirits for days. Constantly before him was the picture of his lovely mother struggling with poverty for her little children, then of laying them side by side in the churchyard; of her faithfulness in ministering to her raving, besotted, dying husband, then of her folding her weary hands above her broken heart and going to rest. Sad and gloomy was the panorama of the past, and touching to think that he of all that sorrowful group alone remained. No marble marked the spot of any grave; side by side they lay, the grass and daisies their only covering.

"I have no living relatives to care for," he said with deep feeling, "so I consecrate my first earnings to my dead."

They were his, he claimed them, and it was all in this broad world he felt that he could call his own, this one spot of earth where father, mother, two sisters, and a baby brother lay.

The flask of whiskey had been emptied upon

the ground, the bottle crushed beneath his heel as though it were a living enemy, and George raised his head determined to grapple with and conquer his growing appetite. The thought that there might be in his nature a hereditary love for spirits descending though his father made him shudder, and he resolved to quench it or die in the attempt.

It had been two weeks since he had demanded the champagne of Jim and Joe, and from that time he had indulged in some form of stimulant, and lately he had exchanged the feebler wine for the stronger whiskey. It was true he had touched lightly, but even this little had imparted to his system a fictitious strength, and now that he had abstained from all he found himself weak, feeble, trembling, miserable. Till now he had never smoked; but feeling the need of something, he tried a cigarette; and as the effect was decidedly pleasant, he smoked another, and soon this habit grew, until he felt it impossible to quit. No one had warned him of cigarettes, so he felt that, though this was a compromise, yet he was safe. True, his mind would sometimes run back to the times when Miss Olive had warned her class of the evils of smoking, when they promised her never to touch tobacco in any form; but that day had passed, and he felt that no promise he had ever made her was

binding, a woman who could go so far astray, and she a Christian. He was trying to forget her as fast as he could, and he was succeeding well.

For a week now George had refrained from stimulants except cigarettes, but, as soon as he tasted of the syllabub, the wine in it fired his thirst again, inflamed his appetite, and he felt he must have more. In this condition he drew out his cigarettes, then hurrying away from Ned for fear his feelings might betray him, he lighted another cigarette and started home. Two, three, even four cigarettes failed to satisfy him; and finding himself unfit for evening service, he excused himself to his uncle's family and retired. The next morning at an early hour he hurried over to Ross and Foster's, and finding Joe in the office, said in a whisper,

"Joe, I would give five dollars for a drink of whiskey. It looks as if I'll die if I don't get it."

"Why, heigh ho, George!" exclaimed Joe in surprise, "do you drink whiskey? I thought you were a good Sunday-school boy tied to a good Sunday-school teacher's apron-string."

"Hush, sir, no more of that if you please;" and George spoke angrily. "Once I was a good Sunday-school boy, but that time has passed. I quit that *role* the night I called for your cards and drank your champagne. I was cured of that

nonsense, cured by that same good Sunday-school teacher. But enough. Have you anything to drink here? Tell me quick, for I've got to have it, and that quick."

"There is nothing here, George, but perhaps I might possibly get you a drink of something for the five dollars you offered just now. Show your bill and I'll run the risk of getting you some whiskey and hiding it for you."

"Here's the money; uncle paid me up Saturday night. This was devoted to a worthier object, but I must have some whiskey; so take it and now go quick."

Joe crumpled the note in his hand, crept out of the back-door, but in a few minutes returned and beckoned to George, who turned the flask up to his lips eagerly a moment, then went to his work. All the morning he kept away from his uncle for fear he might notice the fumes upon his breath, and there was excitement in his manner, a flush upon his brow, an unusual light in his eye, but it was a busy day and his uncle did not notice. At noon urgent business called him into Ross and Foster's back-room again, and this time turning to Jim and Joe, he said,

"I'm tapering off, boys, you see; help yourselves; it's my treat."

After he had gone Joe turned the flask up to his lips, saying,

"As long as it costs nothing, here goes. This much for rent and risk of discovery."

"How does it taste, Joe?" asked Jim. "I never tasted whiskey in my life."

"It's vile stuff, but I tell you it makes you feel brisk and lively. Try some."

"Hand it over. Whew! it's perfectly horrid, scalded my throat from one end to the other. It is to be hoped the effects will be better than the dose. Whew! it's all up in my head. I feel topsy-turvy. Joe, I must lie down a while, I must nap this thing off. Please tell father. But no, I believe I feel better; it's taking effect. Hurrah!"

In Joe's pocket was a large part of George's money, which he kept without scruple. His father was a close business man, so close that everybody was shy of him, so close that his trades bordered on dishonesty, but he only laughed and called himself "sharp." Joe promised to be a "chip off the old block," for though only a boy of fifteen, his mercenary habits were fast showing themselves. His rule was "Keep all you've got, get all you can," so he caught at George's offer, said business was business, that George's change was nothing to the risk he was running, including a small rental fee, and when he turned the bottle to his own lips it was with a chuckle of satisfaction that it cost him nothing, that if George was goose

enough to throw his money and whiskey away, it was none of his lookout. It had been a big stretch of generosity that he shared in the suppers given by himself and Jim to Will and George, but here his love of fun counterbalanced his love of money.

George found "tapering off" to be difficult. In truth, each day seemed to require a larger drink, until he often found it hard to walk. As this was the busy season his uncle did not notice his condition; indeed, so sure was he of the effect of his conversation upon his nephew that he felt no other warning was needed. It was now no uncommon thing for George to spend his evenings with Jim and Joe, playing cards and drinking. At length Joe laid his plans to play for "stakes" and opened the game by offering to play for nickels. He lost, George won. Drinking and gambling were now the order of the evenings, and George as often lost as won. Larger and larger stakes were put up, and at last, one evening, when beside himself with liquor, George not only lost all that remained of his last month's pay, but he gave his note for his next month's wages too. Filled with mortification and chagrin, he would not go home; and when his uncle entered his store next morning there lay George upon some bags of flour in the deep sleep of drunkenness!

CHAPTER XVI.

SAD TIDINGS RECEIVED.

"MISS OLIVE, did you know that George Stovall was drinking?"

"What! What was that you said, Arthur?"

This was Olive's greeting one morning in Sunday-school. The boy said again with a little tremor in his voice,

"I asked if you knew that George was drinking."

What a terrible shock! For a moment Olive sat like a stone, speechless from grief and astonishment. At length in a hoarse whisper she said,

"Arthur, are you sure? How do you know? Who told you? Oh it cannot be true!"

"Yes, Miss Olive, I think it is true. I cannot doubt it, sad as it is. They say his uncle is in deep trouble about him, that he feels that he has done all he can do for him, and is now almost tempted to cast him adrift."

"Oh, Arthur! Has any other boy of my class heard this?"

"Yes, Miss Olive, we heard it yesterday," several voices answered in one breath.

“Arthur, did you learn how long this terrible thing has been going on? Did you hear any particulars?”

“I did not hear exactly the time, Miss Olive, but I think it has been about two months. The news came very straight to me, for his uncle told my father all about it when he was in M—— the other day. He said he could not account for the change in George; that when he began clerking for him he was so promising in every respect, so honest, industrious, trustworthy, high-toned, really a Christian in consistency of conduct, that his uncle was delighted. He said that about two months ago George received a letter, that he saw him open it, glance over its contents, that his face grew pale, and in a moment he saw him crush the letter violently in his hand and dash it behind a barrel in a far corner. Mr. Stovall afterward looked for it but could not find it. From the reception of that letter, he says, George became a changed boy, was perfectly reckless, did not seem to care what became of him, lost interest in church and Sunday-school, went about moody and absent-minded; that, while he was still industrious and attentive to business, he had undergone a great transformation. That letter is a mystery that has never been unravelled. After this, Mr. Stovall said, he found a flask of whiskey hidden in

the bottom of an old barrel, which George confessed to be his, and he had a long, free conversation with him, telling him for the first time that his father filled a drunkard's grave, and warning him by his untimely death to let the accursed thing alone. He believed that his conversation was all-sufficient, and for a time George became his old self again, but it was only for a few days. One night last week he absented himself from home, and when Mr. Stovall walked into his store next morning, there lay George upon some bags of flour dead drunk!"

Olive was weeping bitterly, hysterically, and tears stood in the eyes of every member of her class. They all mourned for their classmate, but they did not comprehend the depth of Olive's grief. Not a word of the morning lesson had been recited, indeed it had been entirely forgotten; yet this hour was the one which burned deepest into the memories of that class and lingered the longest. Olive suffered the most intense mental agony. Slipping out while the school was singing the closing song, she hurried home. The house was empty, for her parents were already in the church above when she left the Sunday-school room. She was glad to be by herself so that she could weep and pray alone. Pacing to and fro in her room she

agonized in prayer, and the burden of her petition was,

“Oh, God, let this fall upon me alone! Spare, in mercy, that orphan boy!”

She saw herself now, a Christian whose life and precepts had not accorded. She recalled the warnings she had given to her boys, how she had pictured to them grand, pure, untainted Christians, a power in the church, a power in the world, who, walking through it, purified it, and, while its dreadful miasma swept around them, it left them uncontaminated. How she had longed for her six boys to become six God-fearing, God-serving men! She had prayed, yes, she had prayed a great deal, but alas! she had not watched. “What I say unto you I say unto all, watch!” “Watch ye and pray lest ye enter into temptation!” Alas for one unguarded moment, one thoughtless act! Alas for that ten minutes of her life! What the consequences would be she dared not think; indeed she pressed her hands over her weeping eyes so that she might not peer into the dark future. Not once did she console herself with the thought that heretofore her life had been above reproach, her example shining out as the noon-day sun, her work for her Saviour constant, her life consecrated to his glory. Not once did she remember her pastor’s commendation, how the

young people came to her to talk of their souls and ask counsel of her wiser head, nor that upon the most important committees the name of "Olive Greyson" often occurred; and, sweeter than all, that two of her boys had given their hearts to Jesus through her instrumentality, while others were seeking him, mourning sincerely for their sins. No, not once did she think of any of these things; indeed, all the good she had ever done was eclipsed in the shadow of this great sin.

When Dr. and Mrs. Greyson returned from church they found Olive with a burning fever. To every inquiry she replied,

"I am not sick, but I must go to M—— to save George. I must start to-night. I cannot wait. I must go at once to save that boy."

Her parents believed her wild with delirium, and were greatly shocked. Scarcely could they get her to speak of herself at all; it was George's name that was constantly upon her lips.

"It does n't matter about me," she exclaimed. "I must go and save him if I die in the attempt."

So excited and hysterical was she that her father found it necessary to give her a sedative to quiet her nerves. As she was soon sleeping heavily, Dr. Greyson insisted that his wife lie down and leave Olive to his care until morning.

As her sleep continued unbroken, he slipped out at daylight to snatch an hour's rest, and when Mrs. Greyson entered Olive's room a short time after, she was amazed to find her not only up, but with her travelling dress and hat on ready to take the morning train.

"Oh, Olive, my child," she said earnestly, "you will kill yourself. What do you mean? Where are you going?"

"To M——, mother, to save George. You must not stop me, for I must go at once. I was not going without your knowledge, but I thought I would not wake you until the last moment. See, I have only a half-hour now to reach the train."

"But, my child—"

"Oh, mother, don't look and speak that way. I am obliged to go, and this necessity is more imperative than even my mother's wishes."

"Olive, you are ill. Child, I tell you you cannot go. Your fever ran high last night and you were wild. It would be madness for you to leave your room, and you cannot go. Take off your hat, my darling, and be content to be nursed a few days, and then when you are better—"

"Oh don't, don't!" cried Olive, almost wild again. "I must go! See! only twenty minutes are left me. Where is my satchel?"

Dr. Greyson had heard the excited tones and hurried into the room. Without expressing surprise or opposition, he drew Olive to the lounge and with his arm around her he said tenderly,

“Tell me all about it, dear, what the trouble is, where you wish to go, and why.”

Then hurriedly Olive told everything, and her parents understood all and deeply sympathized with her in her anguish of mind.

“You can take the afternoon train, dear,” her father said soothingly, “and you will be able to reach M—— by supper. Your friend, Agnes Maitland, who lives there, has been urging you to visit her a long time. Suppose I telegraph her so she can meet you; or perhaps I had better go with you. What do you think?”

“I do not think it necessary for you to go with me, father. A telegram to Agnes is all that is necessary.”

“But, my child, your father was going to M—— in a few days upon business anyhow, and he can attend to it now as well as later. I really think it best for him to accompany you, for your fever might return to-night.”

“No fear of that, dear mother, since you consent for me to go to George.”

“Olive, my dear child, do be careful of yourself; you may bring on a spell of illness through

over-anxiety and overwork. When will you return, dear?"

"Not until George is safe; I cannot come before, mother. If I find his condition as bad as represented, I am going to beg his uncle to let me bring him home with me. Are you ready to welcome a drinking boy, brought to this condition through your child's influence?"

So tremulously were the words spoken that they came near being drowned in tears, and the answer came just as tremulously and as full of tears:

"Oh yes, my darling, we will help you all we can, and will pray earnestly for that dear boy."

CHAPTER XVII.

HASTENING TO THE RESCUE.

“BUT, Olive, I have made an engagement for you to go to this concert, and you surely will not refuse. I do not know when such a pianist has visited our city before, and I was so delighted that you were coming at this time, knowing how you love good music.”

“No one loves good music more than I; but, dear Agnes, while I am here to make you a visit, there is before me a mission work in your city, and I cannot think of my pleasure till this is accomplished.”

“Oh pshaw, Olive, you are no missionary that you have to go out in the highways and in the slums of cities to reclaim the fallen. This surely is no work for a pretty, fascinating girl like you. Let the preachers do this work; there are refined pleasures for you, intellectual gratifications more than most girls can enjoy. I did not invite you to go to the theatre, although there is a rare troupe here right now; neither to the ball to-night, to which we are both invited, for both of these amusements, I know, are contrary to your religion; but you cannot possibly

object to this concert, and I positively insist upon your going, and with the gentleman who solicits the pleasure of your company."

"Did you say he was to call this morning?"

"Yes; he is too conventional not to call first and be introduced."

"You are very kind, Agnes, to think of my pleasure and provide for it before my arrival, and I accept your arrangement with pleasure, but you must excuse me immediately after breakfast, though I will return as early as I can."

"Look here, Olive Greyson, I never heard of a girl accepting pleasure and the escort of a handsome, rich young man with a sigh before. Now let me tell you, young lady, you are mine so long as you are in this city, and I shall control your going out and your coming in, shall prescribe for your health, and provide for your recreations, which shall be legion. Your mission work (and who cares a fig for mission work!) has got to be entirely subservient to pleasure; but if it is absolutely imperative for you to look after that Sunday-school scholar, as you say, I'll give you two hours immediately after breakfast, when I practise and take my music lesson, but the rest of your valuable time is mine. I'll let you go now, but you must make haste back lest Mr. Lynnwood should call in your absence."

Immediately after breakfast Olive hurried over to Mr. Stovall's store, which her father had pointed out the evening before, as they drove from the dépôt to Mr. Maitland's, and he promised to meet her there about ten o'clock if his business engagements would permit. In spite of her brave heart, Olive found herself growing more and more nervous as she approached Mr. Stovall's store, and she walked slower and slower, hoping her father might overtake her before she reached the doorsteps. Olive had prayed for pardon and believed it had been granted her; she had begged too for wisdom, prudence, gentleness, even the very words to meet George with; and yet never in all her life had she felt so weak and trembling before.

A portly, ruddy-faced man was standing near the doorway as she approached, and looked surprised to see a lady entering a wholesale grocery, but with great politeness he made out to say,

"Good morning, miss. Is there any way I can serve you this morning?"

"Thank you, sir; is this Mr. Stovall?"

"Yes, miss."

"Mr. Stovall, I am Olive Greyson, of the town of L——."

"Miss Greyson, Miss Olive Greyson," repeated Mr. Stovall, his eyes cast upon the floor in thought. "Your name is very familiar, Miss

Greyson, but for my life I cannot remember where I have met you."

"We have never met, sir, but you may have heard your nephew, George, speak of me, as I was his Sunday-school teacher."

"Oh yes, now I remember. Miss Greyson, I am pleased to meet you. Yes, I have heard George speak your praises often. Poor fellow!"

All this while Olive's eyes ran down the length of the counters, scanning the faces of the clerks for one familiar. As she entered, far back, bending over a barrel he was marking, was a boy, who looked up as he heard a lady's voice. His eyes dilated a moment in wonder, then, dashing down the brush he held in his fingers, he slipped softly out of the back-door.

"I will not see her. She need not be coming here!" he exclaimed as he hid behind a pile of boxes in the back-yard.

Olive had a long conversation with Mr. Stovall. She told him what she had heard of George, and this he corroborated; then she explained the fated letter which was such a mystery and which had caused so much trouble, made her own sorrowful confession with tearful eyes, and then told the object of her visit to M——. Mr. Stovall listened intently, then talked with deep feeling of his nephew, said he was then pondering what his duty was in his case, felt that he stood

as a father to the boy and was determined to do a parent's part. Looking down the store, he called out,

"Where is George?"

A clerk replied, "He was here a while ago, sir, marking some barrels for the train, but he seems to have left the store for some purpose."

"Miss Greyson," and Mr. Stovall leaned over the counter and spoke in a low tone, "if the truth were known, I suspect George either recognized your face or your voice, and that is the reason he is not to be found. He hates to meet you, and I do not wonder."

"It is a mutual dread, Mr. Stovall, for if he is guilty, so am I. I must meet him though; I am determined not to go home until I do."

"I shall be glad to aid you, Miss Greyson, but we must act wisely and prudently in this matter. I think, perhaps, it is best for me not to allude to your being in the city. When will you call again?"

"My friend, Miss Agnes Maitland, claims my time for the rest of to-day, so I shall not be able to come again until about this hour to-morrow morning."

"That will do. I shall expect you then. Are you visiting Mr. Maitland's?"

"Yes, sir, our families have long been friends."

"You say you are from L——. Are you any relation of Dr. Lucius M. Greyson?"

"He is my father, sir."

"Then I can claim your father as an old college mate. I am certainly glad to know his daughter. Suppose, Miss Greyson, you finish your visit to Mr. Maitland's family, and then come over and visit my family; this will throw you certainly with George."

"Thank you, sir, for your kind invitation, and I accept it with much pleasure. I shall have a twofold motive now in making this visit: first, to become better acquainted with my father's friend, and, secondly, to bring about my heart's desire. Oh I am sick, sick over George! Please, my dear friend, give me your counsel and your prayers that I may be able to undo the terrible effects of my thoughtlessness."

Mr. Stovall seemed unable to find words for an answer, and they parted in silence. It was eleven o'clock when Olive returned, and she found that Mr. Lynnwood had called, been disappointed that she was out, waited a short time, and finally was compelled to take his leave. Olive cared nothing for the call nor for the pleasure awaiting her at the concert. Her sole thought was George, how she could save George; and while her friend Agnes was talking away of life and its joys, society and its delights, Olive

sat thinking and trying to devise wise plans, and in her heart was a prayer to God for strength and wisdom.

The concert was over and Olive was glad. At any other time it would have been delightful, but her mind and heart were too full to enjoy anything, no matter how elevating.

The morning call was made. Mr. Stovall was waiting and watching for her, but so was some one else, for scarcely had she entered the front-door when Mr. Stovall's quick eye saw a form dart out of the back-door as though in haste.

"He has just slipped out, Miss Olive," he whispered. "I saw him just as you entered pass through the back-door in a hurry."

"I am so sorry," Olive said. "I am afraid he thinks we are plotting against him, since he has seen us talking together, and my re-appearance to-day will confirm him in this opinion. I think perhaps I had better not come any more, Mr. Stovall. I am sadly disappointed, yet what right have I to feel impatient? Oh I will wait, wait patiently, and pray God to make an opportunity for me."

"And I will join you heartily in that petition. How many more days will you remain at Mr. Maitland's?"

"Agnes will not listen to a shorter visit than

a week, so I have yet four more days to remain there."

"We may expect you next Monday then?"

"Yes, sir, I will leave Mr. Maitland's for your house next Monday. My hope is based upon my visit to your family, Mr. Stovall. It is better, I am persuaded, for me not to come here to see you again, since it may seem to George to be persecution, and my anxiety may thwart the object of my visit to M——. As I said a moment since, I shall pray earnestly for an opportunity, and believe that God will make it for me. Good-by, Mr. Stovall, until we meet in your own house."

"Good-by, Miss Olive; we shall await you impatiently, I assure you."

CHAPTER XVIII.

PROVIDENTIAL AID.

EARLY upon the fifth day a man appeared at Mr. Maitland's door with a note for Miss Olive Greyson. Olive hastily opened it and read :

“DEAR MISS GREYSON: Our prayer is answered, the opportunity has come. Last evening just before dusk, as George was going with my drayman to superintend a shipment of goods at the dépôt, my horses became frightened, the driver lost all control of them, and George, who was standing, was thrown violently upon the ground, and a barrel rolling on his leg crushed it terribly! We were up with him the entire night, fearful of internal injuries; but the physicians in attendance hope that our fears are groundless, and, except for the fracture, think he is doing as well as we could expect. Oh when I lifted him in my arms and smelled his breath, tainted with whiskey, I could not but bless God for his mercy in sending this severe dispensation to save him. Please pray for us. I will keep you informed as to his condition.

“Truly your friend,

“GEORGE E. STOVALL.”

Olive's face was wreathed in smiles as she read the note, so that Agnes asked,

"Good news, Olive?"

"Well, yes. Oh no, not exactly," was replied.

"You smiled more brightly than I have seen you smile for a week, so it must be good."

Olive excused herself and hurried to her room to reply to Mr. Stovall's note, bitterly reproaching herself for rejoicing over George's suffering; and yet she was happier than she had been for days and days. She knew that George could get no whiskey now, that he would be compelled to do without. Then too she felt that her opportunity had come when he would be compelled to lie with splintered limb for weeks, and so many sweet talks she intended to have with him; yet, no, she would not take advantage of his confinement; she would wait patiently and pray; the time she felt sure would come.

Two days more and she was under the same roof with George. How happy she felt! To her anxious inquiry was replied,

"He suffers greatly and fever has set in. Poor boy! How my heart aches for him!"

"Oh mine bleeds for him, Mr. Stovall," she said, "and yet I cannot help feeling happy and thankful, for I believe God's finger is in this dispensation."

"Oh yes, Miss Olive, so do I; but it so pitiful to witness his sufferings. When do you propose to see him?"

"Not at all, sir, unless he asks for me, unless he expresses the desire himself."

"I believe you are right."

"Yes, Mr. Stovall, I have thought it all over, and I have decided that I shall not force myself upon him. I suppose he has never mentioned my name."

"No, Miss Olive, and yet I am constrained to believe he knows that you are in the city. If he is free from fever to-morrow and is suffering less, I think I shall mention that you have been visiting Mr. Maitland's family, that you called at the store to see him and let him know you were in the city, that you and I struck up a friendship since we discovered that your father and I were college mates, that I insisted upon a visit from you, that you are now in the house full of loving, tender sympathy, but that you have declined to see him, since you feel it prudent not to do so."

"Very well, sir, if you think best, please tell him these facts; afterwards my duty will be plain. Oh I should be so happy to be his nurse! You could trust me with him. I should not permit him to talk much, for there is time enough for this in the long convalescence before him."

A week after the accident Mr. Stovall spoke

to George of Olive, told of her being there and why, that while she made the most anxious inquiries after him all through the day, she had not visited him because she feared it would not be prudent, and then he added,

"She told me to give you her tenderest love and tell you how deeply she sympathizes with you, and that if at any time you felt able to see her, she would be glad to come in to read to you or do anything else for your comfort."

George's face showed interest, but he merely said as he turned away,

"I am much obliged, uncle, but I suffer too much to listen to reading."

The reply, a delicate declining to see her, hurt Olive, but she did not despair. Several more days passed, and as his aunt sat by him George said,

"Auntie, is Miss Olive still here?"

"Yes, dear."

"Do you think I could see her?"

"Certainly; I will bring her up. She has felt so anxious about you I know she will be glad to come."

So happy was Olive to lay aside her book and hurry up the stairs, calming herself, choking back her feeling outside the door so that she could meet the suffering boy without agitation. Every pulse in her body was throbbing visibly;

but, controlling her surging emotions, she walked in lightly, sank in a rocker by his side, and taking George's hand in hers said tremulously,

"My poor boy, I am so sorry to see you here!"

"I am so glad to see you, Miss Olive. I have been wanting to see you so long."

"Have you, George? Why did n't you send for me then? I have been only waiting to come."

"Because—because—"

There was silence a moment, and then in almost a whisper George said,

"Miss Olive, do you know everything?"

"Yes, dear, I know everything; but are you strong enough to talk about it now? Wont it excite you too much to review the past? Had n't we better wait?"

"No, Miss Olive, let it all come out now; I'll feel so much better, and believe I will sleep all night long if this burden is lifted from my mind."

"Has it been a 'burden,' dear?"

"Oh such a heavy, heavy burden, such a miserably heavy burden!"

"Do n't you think I had better do some talking first, George, even before yourself?"

"Let *me* confess first, Miss Olive. I want you to see all the wicked things that have been

in my heart lately ; and first, I want to say I have n't loved you much for a long time. Please don't feel hurt with me for saying so, for it is true, and I have been so grievously disappointed in you ; and oh, dear Miss Olive, I lost confidence in you, in everybody, in God, religion, and everything good !”

Tears rained down Olive's cheeks as she sobbed out,

“I do not wonder, indeed I do not wonder. Oh, George, you had every reason to be disappointed in me, every reason to lose confidence in me, every reason to quit loving me. If God in his infinite mercy had not forgiven me I should never have come to you ; but he has, dear George, he has pardoned me ; can't you forgive me too ?”

“Yes, Miss Olive, I can now, but I could not until I got hurt. But as I lay here and thought I felt that I had done you injustice. Please excuse me for confessing how I felt towards you. It seemed to me it would not be honest to lie here and let you talk and be so kind and yet not know. Oh, Miss Olive, you don't know, you can never know, how I have loved and looked up to you as the loveliest, purest, best Christian on earth. I talked of you to the boys here ; I told them Sodom would never have been destroyed if you had been there, that no Sunday-school

teacher ever equalled you, that were I only as good as you I should be perfectly satisfied. They called you my 'pinnacle of perfection,' and you were. When my best friend told me that his father had been at the Springs and saw you—you know what, Miss Olive—I called him a liar, and we would have come to blows had not a policeman stopped us. I refused champagne because you had talked to us and made us promise not to touch liquor in any form; and cards, you said they were wretched gamblers' tools and we must let them alone, and we promised never to touch them. I was firm; I could not be tempted. If all my friends had drank and played I never would, for I had promised my dear teacher; but afterwards—afterwards—am I paining you, Miss Olive?"

Olive was perfectly convulsed with feeling. None of this was new to her; she had known it all before. But no, she had not realized the hold she had upon this orphan boy, and now the past, with its weakness, its yielding, its sin, the possibilities for good in her influence over George, loomed up, and she could not control her deep emotion. At length she said,

"'Pained,' George? Oh indeed I am wounded almost unto death; but it is right, my punishment is just; I deserve it all. I do not murmur; let it come."

"Miss Olive, please forgive me; I have said too much. I would not add one iota to your grief for all the world. I felt that I must tell you all; I could not bear to hide a single thing; and yet what was your slight failure to mine!"

"Oh, George, don't call my failure 'slight;' it was enormous. Nothing can justify my course."

A few moments of thought and then George asked,

"Miss Olive, how did you hear about me?"

"I heard it at Sunday-school, George, through one of the boys."

"Please tell me how much you heard."

"He asked me if I knew George Stovall was drinking, and when I expressed my utter amazement he said it was true, that you had undergone a great change, that you had received a letter which had had a strange effect upon you, that your uncle had seen you reading it, that you suddenly crumpled it in your hand and dashed it violently from you, and from that time you became a different boy."

There was a pause, and then she asked,

"Was that my letter, George?"

"Yes, Miss Olive," was softly answered.

"Was it that letter which changed your whole life?"

"I must answer truthfully; yes, Miss Olive,



it was. I became perfectly reckless from that time."

"Did you read the entire letter, George?"

"No, ma'am, I was so overwrought I glanced down till I came to the words, 'I played cards, I drank wine,' and then in a burst of the most intense feeling I crushed the thing in my hand and dashed it as far as I could send it across the room. Why should I read it? I had learned all I wanted to know; what more did I care for? Since I have been lying here, Miss Olive, I have wished for that letter that I might read it, for in my heart I feel that I may have done you gross injustice. Will you tell me, please, all that letter contained?"

"It was merely an explanation of my act. I did not try to justify myself, but I simply told you how far I went and why. I told you that during my stay at the Springs I had tried to keep unspotted, tried to keep close to my Saviour amid the gayest surroundings, had wounded the feelings of a Christian young man, who saw no sin in dancing, by declaring that not even the door of a ballroom was any place for a Christian, and had turned off and refused to witness the dance. I had joined in innocent games and recreations, in picnics and rambles for wild flowers, and I endeavored to show all those gay young people that young Christians need be

neither fettered nor strait-laced, that of all people in the world they should be the brightest, the happiest. My intimate friend was Lottie Bell, a noble, lovely girl and a Christian. She saw no harm in a game of cards and frequently played. I have often waited for her until the game was ended so we could take our usual promenade before retiring, but I had no thought of ever touching a card. The night before one of the ladies was to leave the Springs the Euchre Club gave her a farewell evening, and invited me to attend, although I did not belong to their party. I went into the parlor, intending to remain but a few moments and then go to my room, read, and write letters. Just as I was about leaving one of the ladies was summoned to her room by the illness of one of her children, and an exciting game seemed likely to be broken up for the want of one player. Lottie begged me to take the vacant chair, declaring I would be really disobliging if I allowed the game to be stopped, and then from every table urgent voices echoed the request, until I was in a dilemma. Everybody waited upon me. I did not want to appear disobliging neither did I want to be over-scrupulous, and as I had learned a little of the game by standing behind Lottie's chair, and as voices began again to urge me to take the seat, I sat down and was in the midst of

the game when refreshments were brought in. I took a piece of cake but positively refused the wine, which when the young man I had previously wounded saw, he whispered to the waiter, who soon appeared with a glass of lemonade, which he placed before me upon the card-table. From its color I knew that it was mixed with claret, and it remained untouched, when upon looking up I caught the young man's eye, and his glance at my glass plainly asked, 'Does not that suit you either?' Again the fear of being thought over-scrupulous seized me, and in an impulsive moment I raised the red lemonade to my lips and drank! Oh, George, to recall those ten minutes of my life! I had prayed but I had not watched. Could I only live the past summer over again, I verily believe I would die before I would yield. This was what I wrote you, George, not in excuse for my sin, but somehow I wanted you to know all the circumstances by which I was surrounded; yet you did not read my letter; you knew only the fact that I played cards and drank wine."

"Oh, Miss Olive, I am so sorry. Why did I not read every word! Had I done it my own life might have been so different. It does seem to me if ever any one had an excuse for doing those things you certainly did."

"No, George, there was no excuse. I com-

mitted a grievous sin. It is so easy for persons spending the summer away from home in cities and gay places to fall into temptation, to feel that because they are among entire strangers they need not be careful of influence and example, that they can do things they would never consent to do at home. I was anxious to spend a summer at the Springs, but I tell you my sufferings since that summer have far counterbalanced my pleasure while there. Oh would to God I had remained at home in the monotonous round of duty! Then I might have been spared so much, and you, dear boy, might have been spared so much too!"

"Miss Olive, I have been a terribly wicked boy."

"And it was through your Sunday-school teacher's life and influence. George, this is the dreadful part to me."

"But, my dear Miss Olive, you have no idea how wicked I have been. Please listen to me and let me tell you everything, and then I shall feel my mind relieved. First I began with champagne, then wine came next, and since that was so expensive whiskey was substituted. I learned to love it; the effect was delightful; I learned to love the very taste. For weeks I was under its influence; but I did more than drink, I gambled. I won and lost money, and if by

any reason I could not get to my flask, I smoked cigarette after cigarette, hoping to get through them some stimulus. Since I have been lying here it seemed to me I would die if I did not get some stimulant; but I could not get it and I would not ask uncle for it, and though I hinted often at my weakness, the physicians would not prescribe it. When under the influence of an opiate I could get along without it, but at other times it seemed to me my whole system cried aloud for whiskey; indeed, it has only been within the last few days that I have felt at all like my old self. Now it is a pleasure to lie here out of the reach of whiskey, cigarettes, and cards, for my conscience does not stab me as it was all the time doing before. But oh, my dear Miss Olive, I am actually afraid to get well! I am afraid of the fetters of drink, am afraid I will go straight back again into those sinful paths. I did not dream there was any hereditary love for it in my constitution, but there is; it descended from my father to his son. This is a horrible thought to me, that the love of liquor can descend from one generation to another through a long ancestry. Who in all this broad earth can hold up his hand and say, 'I am free from all taint'? No one; not I, not you, not any one. Oh, Miss Olive, what shall I do? I cannot lie here for ever, yet I am afraid to get

well. Oh I fear I am gone, that my whole life is already a wreck!"

"My dear boy, this is inexpressibly sad. Your only safety is in total abstinence. You cannot tamper with anything that borders on spirits, or you will indeed become a wreck. Smoking, the use of tobacco in any form, physicians tell us, will eventually lead to the craving for something stronger. Let everything of this kind alone, now and for ever."

"Oh but I am so weak, Miss Olive, and it has such a hold upon me, I am afraid to trust myself."

"Yes, George, you are weak, but Jesus is strong. He will be your strength if you will only put yourself in his arms. While you lie here, thank him for his infinite mercy in not allowing you to be killed in that terrible accident, and you a drinking boy! We must not talk any more to-day, for fear it may injure you and bring on fever. I am going down stairs now to let you rest, and while you lie here alone I want you to find an answer to this solemn question: 'What would have become of me had I been cut off in my sins?'"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WAY OF RETURN.

OLIVE was happier than she had been in many a day: not because she felt that George was safe from temptation, not that he had given himself into the Saviour's keeping, but because he saw and felt his sins, because he knew his weakness and feared to trust himself. She had thanked God many times for George's accident, his suffering, for it had made him stop in his mad career and think, and it had brought them together again. She had told her mother when she left home that she should not return until George was safe, and though weeks had passed since her arrival, yet still she stayed. In a conversation with Mr. Stovall she had expressed the desire to carry George home with her, and he had cheerfully consented for him to go as soon as he could be moved with safety, and he believed that he and the physician could carry George over to L—— without danger in a few more days. Olive ran up to his room and said brightly,

“George, I want to carry you home with me. May I?”

George seemed unusually despondent this morning and replied seriously,

“Miss Olive, that question solves the mystery of your visit to M——; it is solely on my account you came, on my account you are visiting my uncle’s family, on my account you have lingered here so long.”

“Never mind about all this, George. Don’t trouble your brain with mysteries and hard riddles, but answer my plain question, ‘Will you go home with me?’ ”

“Would you be willing to have such a terrible trouble on your hands, Miss Olive?”

“Yes, indeed. Then I am answered; you are willing to go?”

“I shall be delighted to go, Miss Olive, but I am sorry I shall be such a burden to you. Oh I am such a trouble to everybody!”

“Now, George, you and I are not going to have any such words as ‘burden’ and ‘trouble’ in our vocabulary. You see this is the way I look at matters: it will be some time before you are fit for work, and the hours of a tedious convalescence will drag heavily; and perhaps going back to your old home, seeing familiar faces and mingling with former companions, these things will brighten you up, and I believe in the end you will get well more quickly there.”

“The visit will be a great pleasure to me,

Miss Olive, and all you say is true, but beyond and beneath these reasons I can read a deeper one: I will be near you and you can watch me. I will gladly go, and for this last and best reason. Oh, my dear friend, rather than to fall into such sins again, I really believe I would rather lie on this bed of suffering for ever! I am so weak, my resolution is nothing, and, as I told you, even since I have been lying here my thirst for liquor has been almost unbounded. I cannot get it, nobody will bring it to me, but how will it be when I am walking about again and it is within my reach?"

"Let us trust God for the future, George. As long as you feel your weakness and know the force of the temptation, as long as you fear your own self, nay, as long as you put your trust in God, you are safe, never fear."

"But, Miss Olive, what right have I to trust in God or to look to him for strength?"

"None whatever, George. No sinner has any *right* in himself. We have forfeited all, and deserve nothing but death, eternal death."

"How can I hope for any help from him, then?"

"For Christ's sake—only for Christ's sake."

"Oh I hope and pray he will not leave me to myself again. Oh 'for Christ's sake' I trust he will be my strength!"

“Amen! I respond from the depths of my heart, George.”

“It is so dreadful to inherit a love for drink, Miss Olive.”

“It is, indeed.”

“Will I have to fight it all my life, do you suppose?”

“If it is not a lifelong fight, it will certainly be a lifelong watching, George.”

“Oh dear! I do not feel equal to it. Sometimes, Miss Olive, I am tempted to give up, to stop fighting and let self have the mastery, to yield to appetite, to drink all I want, drink on and drink on, get out of the world and people’s way just as fast as possible. ’Twill only be talked of a moment; I will soon be forgotten. ’Twill be only a boy gone, only another hillock by my mother’s side, only one more soul lost to hope and heaven!”

“George! George!” cried Olive. “That is the devil’s work; he tells you this, and oh you are listening to him. I shudder at your words; you horrify me when you talk so. The devil knows that your heart is his best friend, that its arguments are all for him, and you are ready to open your arms and embrace him with all his terrible temptations. ‘Only a boy,’ you said, but it is ‘a boy’ that has the noblest qualities of mind and heart, whose influence is already great,

whose strong character can make him a power in any circle. Yes, it is 'only a boy,' but that boy is fast becoming a man, and he can, if he will, become one of the strong pillars of his community, of the church of God, a light to point others to Christ, a sturdy, healthy Christian. Oh, George, it seems to me I can sit here and look down the long vista of the future and see the possibilities for you, a grand Christian man, firm as the rock of Gibraltar because planted in Christ, an earnest, working, self-sacrificing, purifying, restraining, encouraging Christian, honoring and glorifying your Master. 'Only one more soul lost,' you say. Oh God forbid! God grant me years and years of life to live that I can pray for you. God grant me strength that I may spend myself repeating your name at the throne of grace, because through me, a weak, erring Christian, you have been nearly ruined. No, my boy, you will not be lost; you will be saved. I have faith to believe that you will become a Christian, and that speedily. Do not array yourself against Christ, George, do not push good thoughts and resolutions from you and encourage the devil in his efforts at damnation. You have not stopped praying, have you?"

"I have not prayed in a long, long time, Miss Olive."

"Shall I pray with you, George?"

“If you wish, Miss Olive.”

With this half consent Olive fell upon her knees at the bedside, and such a tremulous, tearful, heart-broken prayer went up to heaven, so full of love for her wandering boy, so full of confession for herself, so full of faith in her Saviour and trust in his boundless mercy, full, yea, overflowing, with tears, that, as she prayed, and heard the sobs from George's lips and felt the bed shake with his strong emotion, her pleadings were changed to thanksgiving, and she arose happy in the assurance that George was safe.

Olive was ready now to go home and leave him in her Saviour's hands. How sweet and full the assurance was! In what loving, omnipotent arms she had placed the poor wandering boy! Her heart was full of happiness when she went to say ‘Good-by,’ for it would only be a short time before she would welcome him home.

The days seemed long and dreary to George now, for Olive had brought bright sunshine with her, and between conversation and reading she had relieved the hours of their monotony and dulness. Now that he was necessarily so much alone, he had ample time to think and pray. He had been touched by Olive's prayer as he had never been touched before. The Holy Spirit was at work. For days after Olive left he was sunk in the depths of the darkest despair, and in truth it

was a long night of anguish; but at last the morning dawned, bright and beautiful without a single cloud, and then Olive received these lines written from George's chair:

“DEAR MISS OLIVE:—I have a Saviour too! I wish you were here so I could tell you how precious my Saviour is, how I love him, how I trust him, and what sweet peace he has spoken to my sorrowing heart. I was utterly miserable after you left, I missed you so much. I felt that you were gone and that I had no one to tell me how to find the Saviour I was so anxiously seeking, but now I know that your going was for the best. Since I had no one to go to, it drove me straight to Jesus. I told him that you had gone and I did not know what to do or how to seek, and, while I was groping about in darkness with my arms outstretched for help, oh I do not know what I said or did; I only know that light broke in upon my soul and that I was full of peace and joy indescribable. It was midnight; I had heard the clock strike twelve; and I lay there rejoicing in the dark, feeling that I did not want to sleep, I was too happy, and wishing I could proclaim to the world ‘what a dear Saviour I had found.’ The thought occurred to me that it would be better for me to die right then than to live and have to struggle with my

weakness. Don't you see the devil was with me even in that happy hour? but I cried aloud, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' It was one of the verses you had taught us, Miss Olive, and as I brandished this weapon in the devil's face he fled. Words cannot describe to you how perfectly happy I am. Dear Miss Olive, I can see your face as you read these lines, so full of tearful joy that I do not ask you to rejoice with me, for I know you already do. You will not have time to answer this, for a few hours after its reception I will be with you. Till then, good-by,

"Your happy pupil,

"GEORGE."

No, there was no time for a letter, but there was plenty of time for a telegram, and over the wires flashed the words:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. O. G."

They were strange words to be sent over the wires, and the operator read and re-read them with wonder, but they were traced in a man's bold hand and sent up to George, and in a boyish way he pressed the scrap of paper to his lips and then put it in his box of treasures in his bureau drawer.

One more day and George was walking up

the front path of Dr. Greyson's residence upon two crutches, a strap supporting his weak knee. Olive's face was radiant as she ran out, exclaiming,

"Oh, George, my brother, welcome, welcome!"

How delighted every one was to see him! Olive had arranged his room with her own hands, and it was bright and fragrant with flowers. Dr. Greyson's chair for invalids was brought down from the garret, and it did good service; and George, his face a little white from long confinement, looked calmly happy. Olive had planned a surprise for him, and just before supper the other members of his Sunday-school class dropped in and were delighted to meet their old friend and classmate again. Then, after tea, George's full heart overflowed, and he told the boys of his Saviour's love, his goodness, how long-suffering he was, how easy to find, and that no peace, no happiness, could compare with the joy which followed forgiveness. The two boys in the class who had put on Christ testified to the truth of all George said, and the three unconverted ones looked solemn indeed. Olive sat by in silence and tears, and when they all parted at a late hour, she exclaimed,

"This is the happiest night I have ever known!"

Dr. Peyton, who had accompanied George to L——, now went back to the city, turning his patient over to the care of Dr. Greyson. It was sad to see so active a boy limping around upon two crutches, but George did not murmur; he was thankful that he had been permitted to live, thankful that the terrible fracture had healed healthily and that both limbs were saved, thankful that he could walk again upon the brown earth out under the blue sky, and breathe in the bracing wintry air. As Olive sat by him one day reading, she suddenly stopped, laid her book down, and said,

“George, I feel that I cannot warn you too much. I do not want you ever to forget my misstep, and I want you to remember that the command is, ‘Watch’ as well as ‘Pray.’ Never conclude, not even if you are in Australia, that you have no influence as a Christian, that your example away from home will amount to nothing; and never be afraid of being counted too strict, strait-laced, and over-scrupulous. Remember that you are individually responsible to God for your actions, your influence, and your example, that your light must be kept trimmed and burning and not allowed to flicker, lest for the want of it some poor soul will stumble. I have heard ministers speak of the ungodly stumbling over cold Christians into hell; yes, and they may

stumble over the thoughtlessness of Christians whose lives are circumspect and whose hearts are not entirely cold. This is a terrible figure to me. Many sinners excuse themselves upon the plea that their lives are more consistent than those of many Christians—they would not be guilty of the heinous sins that some Christians are guilty of. How the evil work of Christians is to follow them I do not know; but this I do know, that the ungodly cannot plead the coldness, negligence, and sins of Christians at the bar of God, for each must stand for himself, one and alone. Oh, George, never dishonor your Saviour by missteps; your influence will be so weakened and you may do positive injury. Take warning by me. Last July I played cards and drank wine. It is now December, and for five months I have been laboring to undo the work I did then; and, not only so, but I started to life a thirst in you that you did not dream existed, and you will have to struggle with it all your life."

"But, Miss Olive, I shall have grace sufficient unto my day now, shall have strength given me to resist."

"Yes, George, this is promised us; but, my dear boy, while your heart is changed and your nature renewed, it is not obliterated. I do not want to say one discouraging word, but I want

you to keep on the alert and watch, for I fear that in moments of depression, of physical weakness, the devil will be at your elbow whispering that you need a stimulant. Do not let him surprise you; be on the lookout for him at every turn and be ready to brandish Scripture at him, for he cannot stand that."

"I hoped I should have no more of this conflict, Miss Olive."

"I thought you felt safe now, George, therefore I gave you this warning, this urgent word to *watch*. There is a question I have wanted to ask you ever since you have been here, but I have put it off because I dreaded your answer. I will avoid it no longer. Tell me, George, were there any of your companions who were led to do wrong through you?"

"Yes, Miss Olive; there were three I influenced."

"Alas! there my sin faces me again. Since I caused you to go astray, whom you influenced I influenced. Oh if it could have stopped with one, just you, it would have been bad enough, but to extend to others, to have other souls endangered too, this is awful. Tell me who it was you influenced, for I must save them too."

"I would have spared you this, Miss Olive, if I could have done it, for I have caused you so much suffering and anxiety myself."

"No, don't try to spare me, George; tell me the worst, the very worst."

"Suppose, Miss Olive, you let me begin my Christian work by trying to reform those three boys, by trying to undo my evil work."

"This will be right, George, but I want to know all about them, so that I can pray for them and you intelligently, so I can second your work, so I can go over to M—— and labor for them with my whole energy if you find I can aid you."

Then George told Miss Olive of Jim and Joe, how they first tempted him, and how his firm refusal to yield filled them with respect and made them determine to break off from their loose habits and be better boys. Afterwards, because he fell into sin, they went deeper and deeper, until it was no uncommon thing for them to spend half the night drinking and gambling. Then he spoke of Ned in a tender voice, of the kindness of Col. Winters' family to him, of the delightful and profitable Sabbath afternoons he had spent with them, of their sympathy with him since he had no mother, no sister, to make him happy, and was only a poor lone boy in a big city. He added,

"My heart bleeds for Ned. I kept away from his home when I knew I was living wrong, and I would not go to Sunday-school for fear of

meeting him. After uncle's talk with me and I was doing better, I went to Sunday-school, met Ned, and promised to go out to his house that afternoon. I went, but I could not go into the presence of the ladies as boldly as before, so, pleading inability to sing on account of hoarseness, Ned and I went down to the fish-pond, sat in the boat, and talked. I had stopped short off from liquor and my thirst for it was gradually dying out, and I hoped in time to get rid of it entirely. Ned said his mother had saved us some syllabub and cake from dinner, and brought it out to me as I sat in the boat. The minute I tasted the wine in the syllabub, my thirst started to life again; all the old love for it was renewed, and the few spoonfuls in the bottom of the glass instead of satisfying me only set me on fire. With an uncontrollable craving for more, I pulled out some cigarettes, which until then I had kept concealed, and smoked. Ned is a good boy, but easily influenced, and thinking cigarettes looked stylish and manly, he finally accepted one and smoked until his head began to reel, and then he threw it overboard. It was my last visit to Col. Winters', but I have since learned that Ned continued to smoke, until finding that cigarettes demanded more stimulant, he took his mother's keys, opened her pantry, and in time drank up everything in the shape

of wine and cordial it contained. He was found out, for his condition betrayed him, and in deep sorrow they are laboring with him to keep him from habitual drunkenness. I cannot tell you, Miss Olive, how I regret this, how I mourn over Ned. I feel that I am the viper taken into their bosoms, loved, trusted, and nurtured, only to sting them to death."

"Oh, George, how sad this is! Only see how my work increases! Here is an endless chain, begun with me, continued in you, and now growing longer in three others. How many have been brought under the influence of these three, eternity alone will unfold. Truly the evil multiplies."

"And how much quicker it grows than good. Last night, Miss Olive, I lay awake thinking of these three boys, and I came to the conclusion that I must go back home, that there was work waiting for me which could not be put off. My time has been delightfully spent with you here, but I cannot be idle any longer. I must go back to M——."

"But you are not able yet, George. You surely will not attempt to go into your uncle's store and attend to your ordinary duties yet a while."

"I am improving rapidly, Miss Olive. Why, I can walk upon one crutch now and get about

very well. I cannot do much as salesman yet, but I may be able to sit at uncle's desk and aid him in his correspondence ; at any rate I must do what I can. I must look after Jim and Joe, and especially after Ned ; besides, I am anxious to hear from my cousin Will, to know whether my conversion had any effect on him, as my uncle hoped it might. I will have to leave to-morrow, Miss Olive."

"Much as I would love to have you stay, George, I will not be in the way of your duty. Perhaps you are right in your decision. Life is too short to be wasted in pleasure. 'The night cometh when no man can work,' this we know. Promise me that if there is anything you think I can do you will let me know, and that you will keep me posted about your work, your success, encouragement, or even discouragement."

"I promise gladly, Miss Olive. It makes me feel so much stronger, not only to know that my Saviour is near to aid me, but to feel that there is one on earth sympathizing with me and waiting to cheer and help me. Yes, I promise gladly that you shall hear from me frequently."

CHAPTER XX.

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER.

"WHY, George, I am glad to see you back again, my boy, but sorry that a crutch is still a necessary appendage."

"Thank you, Col. Winters. I am glad to be out again, sir, even though I am compelled to call in the aid of a crutch; indeed, sir, I am thankful that God did not strike me dead in that dreadful accident, before I had made my peace with him."

"Yes, George, yes. God has been good to you, my boy. Naturally he made you better than most boys, and now grace has renewed your heart. I give you my hand in Christian greeting, my brother."

"From the depths of my heart I thank you, Col. Winters. Tell me, please, of Ned, how he is. I have not seen him since my return."

"Oh, George, poor Ned! He is in a terrible way; I cannot understand it at all. Will you come to see Ned, my boy?"

"Gladly, colonel, as soon as my work will permit; indeed I intended to hunt Ned up without waiting for any invitation from you. I am

so sorry to hear you speak so of him. Is he not well, or is it that he is not doing well? I have heard some reports about him, but hoped they might be unfounded."

"Come out and see for yourself, George. I am glad you have come back on Ned's account, for I hope much from your influence. Suppose you ride out with us to-morrow from church; there will be plenty of room for you in the carriage."

"Thank you, colonel, I shall be delighted to go home with you. You need not trouble about getting me back; I can manage that."

"No, I shall not let you manage that, George, for you must stay all night with Ned, and you can come back with me in my buggy early Monday morning ready for work."

"All right, colonel, I will follow your advice since it is so very pleasant, and will let my aunt know that I will remain at your house until Monday morning."

How different George felt in the carriage with the ladies and Ned than he did the last time he went out to Col. Winters', hiding behind the fence, then slipping off to the fish-pond, a guilty boy! Now his self-respect was restored, and he could look every one in the face without shame or fear; but Ned, by his side, was restless and uneasy, showing himself little inclined to talk to his old friend, and his downcast eyes seemed to

see nothing of the beautiful world on that bright, sunshiny day.

George had taken this contemplated visit and laid it at his Saviour's feet, and he believed that He would give him strength to say and do whatever was right. He felt that the position he occupied was delicate, but his prayer he was sure would be answered, and gave himself no further concern about it. Conversation naturally turned upon the accident which caused the necessity for the crutch, his sufferings, long convalescence, and finally his conversion. How glad he was to speak a word for Jesus! How he loved to dwell upon the Saviour's mercy, his love, his long-suffering patience and goodness, and every face beamed in sympathy but one, and this one was looking out of the window and seemed intently watching the revolutions of the carriage wheels. George was shocked at the change in Ned. Hitherto he had been a loving, confiding boy in the heart of his family, but now he seemed to sit apart, one alone. Companionship appeared unwelcome, friends it seemed that he wanted none; all that he desired was to be let alone. George did not appear to notice. He hoped that when they were by themselves Ned would open his heart, make a full and free confession, and then he hoped to influence him for good. After dinner Genie brought out the new singing-book,

and for a time George sang with great delight; but, seeing that Ned persisted in sitting silently by, and that his face was sullen, as though singing were anything but a pleasure, he whispered to Genie, and walking over to Ned, proposed that they go down and sit in the boat.

"Sing on if you want to," Ned said, "but I get very tired of this everlasting singing on Sunday."

"Why, Ned," George said cheerily, "I think it is perfectly delightful, and I never realized before how beautiful the words of these Sunday-school songs are."

"I remember one Sunday when you did n't think singing Sunday-school songs so 'perfectly delightful.'"

Ned's voice had a little sneer in it, but George replied pleasantly,

"Yes, Ned, I remember it too and with deep regret. Those days are passed, thank God! I would not live them over again for all this world contains. But, Ned, what is the matter with you? You do n't seem like the boy you used to be."

"I'm not; I am a different boy. They watch me so closely I feel as though I had a whole police force after me all the time. Somebody has his eyes upon me the whole day long. I do n't believe the house feels safe until I am sound asleep, and then when daylight comes

that watching begins again. It makes me so mad I feel like putting a bundle of clothes on my back and flying."

"But stop, Ned, why is this? What is the reason they watch you so closely?"

"For fear I'll do something awful."

"What awful thing have you already done, Ned, that causes them to watch you for fear of a repetition?"

"Why, George, I smoked my first cigarette with you. You the good, model boy whom papa was always holding up for my imitation, you taught me how to smoke; and once started, I kept on. I got to loving the things, and all the change I could beg I spent in cigarettes. Many a pack have I smoked out here in this boat, and enjoyed them too. After a while cigarettes did n't satisfy me exactly, and I felt I must have something stronger. I knew where mamma kept her cordial for sickness, so I got the keys and took a sip or two, persuading myself that I was really sick. In a few days I drank up all the cordial, and I tell you my head often went topsy-turvy. When this was gone I found the home-made wine, which was kept for flavoring, and I drank and drank until one day mamma found me lying on my bed pretty far gone. A search was made and the whole truth came out. They think I am a confirmed drunkard and ready

to die any night with delirium-tremens, and they never leave me for a minute for fear I'll get something to smoke or something to drink. Still mamma puts the wine in her sauces because they are flat without it, and has her nice syllabub. She keeps my appetite whetted and fired for worse, and then I'm watched day and night for fear I'll get it. I despise to be for ever watched, to be dingdonged at for ever. If I could run away I'd do it, and stay too."

"Ned," exclaimed George, "I am just as sorry for you as I can be. From the very depths of my heart I sympathize with you. Yes, I led you the first step in the wrong direction, and you will never know how I have grieved over this. That cigarette was the false step. Now I want to help you all I can, for I must undo the evil I have done and I must begin at once. Suppose your parents are willing for you to come and stay a week with me at my uncle's, boarding with me, working with me in his store, would you be willing to come?"

"It is not worth while giving that thought a moment's consideration."

"Why not, Ned?"

"For the simple reason that they will never consent."

"But suppose they were to consent, would you agree to the arrangement?"

"Oh yes, indeed, I would gladly go; but it is not worth while to talk of it, for they will never permit it. Allow me to get out of their sight a whole week? Never."

"Don't give up, Ned, before I try. Now another question. Will you promise to quit these evil habits entirely for that week? Nobody will watch you, you will be left to your honor, but I shall expect you to act the honorable gentleman with me."

"I certainly will, George; you may trust me for that."

"I do trust you, Ned; I trust you without a doubt. Now I am going to see your father and mother and ask permission for you to go."

"Yonder they are, over on that rustic seat, apparently enjoying the sun, but you may depend they went there to keep me in sight."

"Do n't be so suspicious, Ned. I know it is natural in your frame of mind, but do n't think everybody has you in mind whenever they turn around."

"Well, I may possibly be too suspicious, but that's the way it looks to me, and I believe that's the way it would look to you if you were in my fix."

"Perhaps it would, Ned; I can't say; but I'm going now to talk to your father and mother."

As George approached the rustic seat Col.

Winters laid down the paper he had been reading aloud and said,

“What does my boy want?”

George sat down upon a rock in front of them and said,

“I am sorry to interrupt your reading, colonel, but I want to talk to you and Mrs. Winters a few moments, and, seeing you together here, I thought that this was perhaps my best time.”

“No matter about the reading, George,” Mrs. Winters said. “What did you wish to speak to us about?”

“About Ned, Mrs. Winters. I came to beg you both to let him go home with me to-morrow morning and stay at least a week, boarding at my uncle’s with me and working with me at his store.”

“You surely cannot know how Ned has been conducting himself lately, George,” said Col. Winters, “or you would never have asked this.”

“Yes, sir, I know everything. Ned has confessed everything to me. It is now my time to make a confession to you both, and afterwards you may not be willing to trust him in my hands. I offered him his first cigarette; he accepted it, smoked, acquired the habit, and from this went on to worse things.”

“Why, George, you amaze me. Did you ever smoke?”

"Yes, Mrs. Winters, and I did worse than smoke. For a time it seemed to me I had seven devils bound up within me, but thank God they are all cast out and I am clothed and in my right mind, sitting at my Saviour's feet. You may well be amazed at this confession from me. It was right for me to make it, much as it fills me with sorrow and mortification to do it. You thought me a model boy, colonel, a fit associate for Ned. I was at first, and when I yielded to temptation I did not come to your house, I kept away; and not until I felt that I had given up my bad habits did I come. I had never been warned of cigarettes, and I thought them innocent things; still in my mind I knew I was making a compromise with evil. Most unfortunately I brought my cigarettes here and thus tempted Ned. Now, colonel, since I have caused him to go astray I shall never be satisfied until he is the same pure, innocent boy he was before. Forgive me, if you can, for doing you this great wrong. I did not dream of any serious results or I would have cut off my right arm before I would have tempted him. Please, dear friends, let me try to undo the wrong I have committed."

"I cannot think that a cigarette could have brought on this evil," said Col. Winters; "surely it could not. I am sorry he learned to smoke, but it seems to me there must be something

back of all this that we do not understand. We are very uneasy about him, are afraid to let him out of our sight for a moment, and feel that his salvation depends upon the closest watching."

"Oh yes, indeed," said Mrs. Winters, tears standing in her eyes, "I never feel that the dear boy is safe unless I am sure he is sound asleep. I cannot see, George, how we can consent for him to leave home, for here everything like wine is locked up hard and tight so he cannot get it; but were he away, why, I verily believe he would be dead in less than a week! Oh this is a terrible grief to us!"

George had a great many thoughts, but he said only this,

"Is it best, Mrs. Winters, to watch him so closely? I believe there are some persons who cannot bear watching; it exasperates them, makes them desperate, and determines them to do all the evil they possibly can. You are much older and wiser than I and know far more of human nature, but I really don't believe I could stand to be watched; and, dear Mrs. Winters, excuse me for saying so, Ned cannot either. I have found this out by talking to him. You have tried *watching*, now, please, wont you try *trusting* a while?"

"Oh, George, how can I? I don't believe Ned can be trusted."

"Mrs. Winters, there is more honor in Ned's nature than you know. He is an honorable boy, and his word will never be broken, you may depend upon that. I asked him if he would like to go home with me, and he consented gladly. I then asked him if I could trust him; he said I could. I told him no one would watch him at all, and asked him if he would act the honorable gentleman with me, and he replied emphatically, 'I will.' Ned is truthful, Mrs. Winters. Wont you trust your boy?"

"Oh, George, how can I?"

"George," and Col. Winters' voice trembled, "yes, I believe I can trust Ned. All you have said of him is true. He has a high sense of honor and is truthful to the last degree. I have told him that he was too easily influenced; perhaps I found too much fault with him in little things. Wife, all George says is true, and I fear we have watched our boy too narrowly and not trusted him enough. I am willing for him to go with George if you are, dear. I can only pray for your efforts, George, in Ned's behalf."

"I suppose I must give my consent too, George, but oh it is with fear and trembling. I want to act wisely at all times, but I know I fail often. Please let us hear from you constantly, for I shall be overwhelmed with anxiety until Ned is safe at home again."

“Colonel, I thank you and Mrs. Winters for trusting Ned to me. I told him no one would watch him, and no one will; but do not be over-anxious, for rest assured that nothing will occur which should be reported to you. I am going over to him now and will tell him simply that you both have consented for him to go with me. Please do n’t let him think it is done reluctantly, for I believe this would wound him deeply.”

“One thing, George, I must insist upon,” Col. Winters said, “and that is, I must pay his board and must remunerate your uncle for allowing him to remain in his store during the specified time. Please explain to your uncle why he comes, and tell him I shall see him myself at my earliest convenience.”

“Very well, colonel, but I am sure my uncle will be glad for me to have George as my visitor, also to have him with me in his store, and I think perhaps it is best for Ned to understand that this arrangement is mine and not yours.”

“Well, my dear boy, manage the whole thing to suit yourself. I will agree to anything.”

CHAPTER XXI.

FAITHFUL EFFORTS REWARDED.

"HURRAH, Ned, you are going!"

"You do n't say so, George! How did you manage it?"

"They are exceedingly anxious about you, Ned, and feel that your whole future life depends upon the present. You think they watch you too narrowly. It is not exactly that they do not trust you; but think, Ned, no one watched you a few weeks ago, and did you prove worthy of their confidence?"

"No, George, I confess not."

"Yet when I told your father what you had promised me, he said, 'Ned is the soul of honor, would not break a promise, and is truthful to the last degree.'"

"Did papa say that of me?"

"Yes, and looked proud of you when he said it."

"Oh I am so glad he thinks I have one good spot."

"Indeed he does. He said perhaps he was wrong in thinking you easily led, that it might

have been his anxiety for you to be independent that made him think so ”

“ And mamma, what did she say ? ”

“ She consented for you to go : but, oh, Ned, her love and anxiety for you are just overmastering. She is willing to do anything, to suffer anything, that is for your good. ”

“ Well, I’m glad I am going, and neither mamma nor papa shall regret that they consented. ”

The next morning bright and early after breakfast the boys and Col. Winters were driven into the city, and George put Ned to work at once. He had a little whispered conversation with his uncle as he sat by his side aiding in the correspondence, and Mr. Stovall smiled, nodded assent, and seemed pleased. Ned worked with a will. All of the seventeen years of his life he had been confined in a schoolroom, and now the change was delightful to him. He had never slept from home before, for his parents did not approve of boys wandering about at night, and when night came it was with a strange feeling that Ned lay down beneath another roof ; and by the time the third night rolled around he was positively homesick. He determined to keep in though, to fight this feeling and the appetite that had enthralled him, until he could go home the same pure, good boy he had always been. George and Mr. Stovall

both watched the battle and gave many a cheering word. At the close of the first week Ned said,

“George, I am going home this evening. Your plan has proved a success. I thank you and your uncle for your efforts in my behalf, and between these, your encouraging words, and unremitting work, I believe I have become a different boy. Your uncle very kindly offers me a situation in his store, and if mamma and papa will only agree for me to accept, I shall be overjoyed. I would like to work for your uncle, to be near you; indeed, since I have been here my feelings and aim are very different from what they were before I came. Then I had lost my self-respect and I did not care what became of me; then I was a child, watched over and chided, but here I have thought and acted for myself. There the restraints made me long to overstep the bounds; here I have had none; no one has kept a vigilant eye on me, and I have wanted neither cigarette nor wine.”

When the buggy drove up to the bank and Col. Winters was about to step in, Ned walked up with confidence and said,

“Papa, my time of probation is out. May I go home with you this evening?”

“Certainly, my dear boy. We are all ready to give you the warmest and tenderest welcome.”

"I do not deserve it, papa, yet I shall be very glad to receive it. I have been right homesick."

"Have you, my boy? I am very glad to hear it, and mamma will be gladder still."

As they reached the gate, Genie, who was standing at the window, exclaimed,

"Yonder is Ned coming with papa."

Mrs. Winters hastily joined her at the window, and said,

"How glad I am! See how happy they both look! Thank the Lord for his goodness. How I have wrestled in prayer since that dear boy went away!"

Up the front walk they came, laughing and talking as though they had not seen each other in months. As Mrs. Winters threw open the door, Ned put his arms tenderly around her and said,

"Mamma, your boy has come back to you, and so glad to get back too."

Mrs. Winters was too full to speak, but Genie said,

"And the same dear old Ned too; I can see that."

"Yes, Genie, only I hope he is stronger in resolution and braver in purpose, a better boy every way, than the Ned who left you. Mamma, forgive me for giving you so much trouble and anxiety."

"My darling," Mrs. Winters made out to say, "this moment repays me for all. Your mother has nothing to forgive, my boy, but oh so much to be thankful for!"

What a happy reunion, although the separation had been so short! They talked that evening till a late hour, and conversation was free, unrestrained, and long. At length Ned said,

"Papa, I have a favor to ask of yourself and mamma."

"Well, Ned, anything, my boy," said Col. Winters. "You see what confidence I place in you to give you this *carte blanche*."

"I will not abuse your confidence, papa; what I have to ask will involve but little. Mr. Stovall has very kindly offered me a situation in his store, and I ask your permission to accept it. I would not do so until I had returned and consulted you and mamma."

"Ned, I can give you a better situation in the bank than Mr. Stovall can possibly offer you, one in which you will get better wages, and I am sure you will like the work more."

"I do not doubt anything you have said, papa; but you know money is no object, neither am I looking out for an easier berth or more pleasant work. What I want now is to add sturdiness to strength, to clinch the work I have be-

gun, to stand by George, that Christian boy, side by side, to feel the weight of responsibility on my young shoulders, to know that though away from home I am trusted. All of my life I have been in a schoolroom, a child, and I shall enjoy going to work, and shall feel the burden of care and responsibility pleasant. I think a business education a most excellent thing to possess, and one of the very best educations in the world; still I am perfectly willing to return to school, to enter college and complete the course you have marked out for me, after I have spent a year or two in business. As far as accepting a situation in the bank is concerned, papa, don't you think I had better be thrown out entirely alone for a while to shift for myself, my success or the want of it dependent entirely upon my own exertions?"

"Perhaps you are right, Ned. Yes, it may be better for you to start out alone, and I am delighted to see the spirit of independence you evince."

"Do you wish to board at Mr. Stovall's too, Ned?" Mrs. Winters asked anxiously.

"No, mamma, I shall come home every night. I forgot to tell you this. No, indeed, I had no idea of boarding at Mr. Stovall's. Home is the sweetest place on earth to me, and I shall cling to it just as long as I possibly can."

"Then, my dear boy, since you asked my consent as well your father's, I readily grant it," said his mother.

"You did n't ask my consent, Mr. Ned," said Genie playfully, "but I grant it unasked. I am so glad you will be with George."

"That is the greatest inducement for me to go to Mr. Stovall's, Genie. I have seen that boy in the store hobbling around on a crutch, suffering at times great pain, I have seen him in his uncle's family, and in the quiet of his own room kneeling in prayer and studying his Bible, and I have longed to be like him, the humble, earnest Christian he is."

How quickly petitions flew heavenward for this once erring boy, that he might find the Saviour he was longing for!

In another moment Ned had walked over and taken the stool at his mother's feet. Looking up in her face, he said, as he took her hand,

"Mamma, dear mamma, I have a favor to ask of *you* alone."

Every one looked with surprise, but his mother said,

"Name it, dear. Your mother is ready to grant you any favor you can possibly ask."

"But, mamma, I fear I may wound you."

"Oh no, Ned, you need not fear that. Go on."

"Mamma, will you promise then that from

this time on you will banish wine, cordial, brandy, everything of this nature from our house?"

Mrs. Winters looked into Ned's eyes a moment bewildered, and he returned the look with one of tearful tenderness, then went on:

"I have learned, mamma, from Mr. Stovall, that it was because a Christian drank wine, one in whom George placed the utmost confidence, that he became perfectly reckless and went to drinking and gambling; but when his uncle talked to him, and warned him of the hereditary love for strong drink that ran like a thread through their family, warned him by the untimely death of his father, George listened, quit all evil practices, and became a sober boy; and afterward—"

Ned paused, and in a husky voice Mrs. Winters said,

"Go on."

Ned went on:

"Afterwards, mamma, the next Sunday afternoon he came out here, we sat in the boat and ate the syllabub and cake which in your kindness you had saved for us. Oh, mamma, I noticed myself how eagerly he drained his glass, how his manner changed, and how he jerked out his cigarettes and smoked, one after another, as though he could never get enough; and then, and then, mamma—I noticed it myself—from

that time his thirst, whetted by the wine in the syllabub, gained complete control, and nothing satisfied him but whiskey, and he drank and drank, until God, in great mercy, stopped him."

"And has my own boy to tell me this!" exclaimed Mrs. Winters, and she buried her face and wept bitterly.

"Mamma, please, mamma—" Ned began, greatly distressed; but his mother wound her arms around his neck and kissed him, as she said,

"Oh, Ned, what a terrible mistake your mother has made! God forgive me! My darling, I thank you for every word you have uttered, although I writhe under the lash. A Christian woman professing to try to do good, yet leading the young astray by the pride of her table; a Christian mother praying for her boy, yet tempting him continually by the food she placed before him! Oh, God, forgive me! Only think that I, a Christian, might have had to answer for the loss of two souls, one an orphan boy, the other the darling of my heart! Ned, your mother has been blind a long time not to have seen this before, and how glad I am that you were brave enough to risk your mother's displeasure and point out her grievous fault. Yes, I am glad and thankful too. From this hour no spirits of any kind shall enter my door, and if I have to dispense with syllabub and sauces

for ever, then let them go : other things are just as good, other things can be substituted that will do no harm. Nothing of this kind will I ever use again."

"Mamma," exclaimed Ned joyfully, "I am so glad you view this matter as I do. As to dispensing with these desserts because they cannot be made without wine, I was talking to Mrs. Stovall upon this very subject the other day, and she said she used no flavoring of the kind from strict principle; that once she had thought that sauces and things of this nature required some form of wine to keep them from being insipid; but that she afterwards determined that whether insipid or not she would do without, and that since this resolution they had positively not missed the flavoring, and that they enjoyed their desserts far more. I really saw no difference between their desserts and ours; but if there was, I think we ought to adhere to principle."

"So do I, Ned, and from this time I shall adhere to principle too, but I am sorry for the years I have spent in this sin. But instead of feeling mortified that I had to wait for my boy to point out the evil of my practice, I am proud that he had the courage and manliness to do it. Oh I see clearly, now that my eyes are opened, that mothers, through the pride of their

tables, have made drunkards of their own sons. Never shall this be charged against me again."

"Well," said Col. Winters, smiling, "I am delighted with this temperance reform. I really believe that mothers can do more than prohibition or high license, by taking the right step at home upon their own tables with their own children. Sober children will make sober citizens."

"I am delighted too, Ned," said Genie, "for, though, like mamma, I never saw the evil of wine flavoring before, yet I see it plainly now, and from this time I shall oppose the use of it at home and wherever else I may have any influence."

In a few days George received the following lines:

"L—, April 27, 18—.

"DEAR GEORGE:—I was overjoyed to read the good news of your letter, to know that Ned was proving so noble and fine a boy, and though not yet a Christian, that he was awake to his condition and felt his need of a Saviour. My prayer ascends for you both constantly, and not for you only, but for all who may have been influenced by you, or rather by me, for your influence is mine. I thank God that Ned is so far safe, and I do not believe it will be long before his feet will be planted firmly upon

the Rock of Ages. All you said of him interested me deeply, especially the position he has taken in his family against the use of wine in desserts. I believe with you that did every woman take this stand, there would be happier firesides and fewer drunkards in the land. Romanists say give them the training of a child till seven years of age, and the impression they will make during those tender years will be so indelible they will ask no more. The Bible tells us too that if the child is trained in the way he should go, when he is old he will never depart from it. The sacred duty of training devolves upon mothers, and this is not for seven years, but for more than double that number, yet the multitude of wicked men in the world proves how faulty this home-training. Where is the home influence, the mother's prayers, the sister's warning! If every mother would take Mrs. Winters' stand, I believe there would be less need for temperance lectures and efforts of philanthropists and Christians to suppress the liquor traffic. We too have made the same resolve in our household, for not another drop of anything spirituous will ever come upon our table again.

"I am so glad you have joined the church, for that was the next step you should have taken. 'In union there is strength,' and I do not wonder

that you feel stronger now that you have confessed your Saviour openly and joined the army of earnest workers who are battling for the Lord. I hope it will not be long before Ned will stand side by side with you in his service, a brother in Christ, a fellow-laborer with Him. Let me hear from him soon, for I am waiting to learn of his conversion. I am expecting much from your influence over your neighbors, Jim and Joe. You seem to hope more for Jim than for Joe, but remember there are no bounds to God's love, his grace, goodness, mercy, and power. With God nothing is impossible. I am praying for you, and if there is anything I can say or do, do not hesitate to call upon me, and I will come at once. Inquire of Ned if there is any one he has influenced, and let us look after that person or persons too. It seems to me that I have thrown a rock into a calm, clear lake, disturbing the glassy surface, causing the concentric circles to widen, reaching farther and farther, until their sweep is almost boundless. How little Christians think of their far-reaching influence !

“ May the Almighty keep you beneath the shadow of his wing, that you may never stray, so that neither thought, word, nor action will ever influence for woe.

“ Affectionately, your teacher,
“ OLIVE GREYSON.”

It was now the middle of May. For ten long sorrowful months Olive had been working to counteract the influence of the past summer. George and Ned were safe, for Ned too had put on Christ and was a member of the church. Fortunately he had been kept so close that he had led no companion astray, so there was no evil work to undo. George's labor with Jim and Joe was long and difficult. They had gambled more than they had drank, and since Joe inherited a love of money and cunning in acquiring it, George found it hard work to persuade him to give up cards and to make what he made honestly. Jim at length pledged himself to stop his evil practices, and Joe, having no partner in guilt, was constrained to quit too, but in his case no conscience was involved. Jim stood firm and kept his promise like an honorable boy. About the last of June Joe's father was stricken with paralysis and died without a lucid interval. His effects were found to be in a sad condition and his estate was involved in heavy debt, for he had thought only of present gain and was working upon fictitious capital. Joe was the eldest son of a large, helpless family, and the insurance upon his father's life simply provided a home, and now he was compelled to support his mother and four little children. The promise that he refused to make to George, God

forced him to carry out to the letter. Under this heavy affliction he was greatly changed, for from a merry, frolicking boy he became suddenly a man with the weight of a large family upon his shoulders. One would have thought that having won at cards, having a taste and talent for gambling, he would have preferred this means of livelihood, but his good sense and ideas of business forbade such a life, and with a serious young face he put his shoulder to the wheel and worked manfully. God had saved Joe.

CHAPTER XXII.

ANOTHER SUMMER.

A YEAR had passed ere all the boys were safe, a year of prayer, anxiety, and work, but now Olive breathed freely. Who would have thought that that one thoughtless ten minutes would have taken twelve long, sorrowful months to counteract it! Another summer had rolled around. Did Olive long for another outing, another visit to the Springs? No, indeed. She was thin and pale, and really needed the benefits of good mineral water and bracing air more than the summer before, but to every suggestion she replied that she preferred to remain at home. Lottie Bell was coming to see her, and a few days after the announcement Lottie was there. How glad they were to be together again, these friends of a summer! How their tongues flew, and how much they had to recount, the events of the twelve months gone! But Olive said nothing of her troubles or the cause, feeling that in these things she and Lottie dwelt apart.

After Lottie had been there a few days Olive was quite surprised when the servant handed her two cards, and upon them the names:

"Frederick A. Lansing."

"Douglass E. Manning."

Lottie laughed merrily at Olive's wonder, while she was not surprised at all, indeed was expecting them that very afternoon. The visit was a mutual pleasure, and the young men protracted their stay in the village for several days.

One evening, as they sat in Dr. Greyson's parlor, conversation turned upon recreation for the summer, when Mr. Manning inquired,

"Are you not going to the Springs next month, Miss Olive?"

"No, Mr. Manning," Olive replied without hesitation, "I do not intend to leave home this summer."

"We had so pleasant a circle last summer," he continued, "Mr. Lansing and I thought we would call and see whether you and Miss Lottie could not be induced to join us. I hoped Dr. and Mrs. Greyson might be persuaded to go again."

Lottie, overhearing Mr. Manning's remark, replied quickly,

"You may count on me, Mr. Manning, but not until August, though. I would not miss my visit to the Springs this summer for any consideration. Come, Olive, don't set your head against this trip, for I heard your father say the other

day that you really needed a change, that you were looking thin and pale, and you are."

Olive shook her head quietly and tried to turn the conversation into another channel; but Lottie, with her usual persistence, said,

"Olive, you can't decide this matter by a shake of your head and an attempt at evasion. I am going out to ask your father if you cannot go, and if he says 'yes,' we will take you '*vi et armis*,' as my Latin grammar used to say."

Laying her hand on Lottie's arm, Olive said,

"No, Lottie, father would consent, I know; but I do not feel that I ought to leave home this summer; indeed, months ago I came to the conclusion that a gay watering-place is no place for me."

"And why not, pray?" Lottie asked. "If you don't need diversion I don't know who does; if you don't need variety, shut up in a little village like this, I would like to know who does. It seems to me, Olive, that you ought to be willing to abide by your father's decision. He has age, experience, and wisdom on his side, and certainly knows better what is for your good than you do."

"Please, Lottie, say no more about this. I would really like to visit the Springs again, but I cannot."

"There is something rather contradictory in

your assertions, Miss Olive," Mr. Lansing said, "for you say you would 'like' to go, your father is willing for you to go, there is no obstacle in your way, yet you declare you 'cannot.' There is a mystery about it I cannot solve."

Mr. Manning waited until his cousin reached a period, and then in a half-impatient way said,

"Please let Miss Olive do as she wishes without questioning, Fred. If she does not desire to go, that is sufficient. The 'mystery,' as you call it, need not be solved."

Olive looked into Mr. Manning's face, and it was evident from its expression that he thought the reason of her opposition to her parents' wishes and to their urgent pleadings was something more than the gay watering-place, and he was inclined to be very silent and dignified.

"Mr. Manning," and Olive's voice was deeply in earnest, "my one and only reason for declining to go to the Springs this summer is because I do not feel that I can be trusted amid its gayeties."

Lottie and Mr. Lansing were inclined to be amused at this declaration, but Mr. Manning received it more seriously.

"I will take you under my wing, Olive," Lottie said with a merry laugh; "then I am sure you will be perfectly safe."

Olive shook her head again, and Lottie added,

"That shake was a poor compliment, Olive. Indeed, since I come to think of it I am really hurt that you received my kind offer without thanks, simply and silently declining it. I tell you, Miss Greyson, it is no small thing to be taken under Lottie Bell's all-protecting wing; it means a great deal."

"What, for instance, Lottie?" Olive asked archly.

"Modesty forbids that I should boast, Miss Greyson, and if your want of perception is so great that you cannot see the advantages to be derived, the punishment I shall inflict is to consign you to continued ignorance."

"Thank you, Lottie, for so light a punishment. 'Ignorance is bliss,' the old adage declares, and in this instance I am inclined to believe it is."

Lottie laughed and replied,

"Come, Olive, I do not feel equal to a tilt of words this evening; let's shake hands and quit. I withdraw my wing of protection since it meets with no appreciation; and now, in plain speech, without preamble or exordium, I call upon you, Olive Greyson, to tell us three people here assembled why you cannot trust yourself at the Springs this summer."

Mr. Manning tried to interpose a word, but Lottie stopped him by saying,

"No, Mr. Manning, your speech is not in

order. I insist upon your sitting perfectly quiet and listening to this confession."

"But perhaps, Miss Olive," Mr. Manning began, but this time Olive interrupted him by saying,

"I am perfectly willing to explain my position, Mr. Manning; indeed, I think the time has come when I should do so. Last summer was the most delightful summer of my life. My happiness at the Springs far exceeded my brightest anticipations. The friendships I formed I prize highly, and I am delighted to renew and extend the acquaintance of three of the friends whom I met there. But, my friends, I made some missteps at the Springs last summer that have taken me twelve long months to retrace. I did not forget my Saviour, I did not forget prayer, but I did forget to watch. Somehow away from home I was led to think example nothing, my Christian influence nothing, but I know better now. Christians cannot be hid, and their example and influence for weal or woe will meet them when they least expect it."

"Olive Greyson," said Lottie seriously, "what did you do at the Springs last summer that took twelve months to undo, months fraught with suffering?"

"I played cards, Lottie, I drank wine."

"And which of us three sitting here can

cast the first stone of condemnation, I would like to know? I thought when people went to watering-places they went to unbend, to have a good time. I thought they went for change, for health and recreation, not for example's sake. Here are three of your party. We all played cards, we all drank wine. We profess to be Christians too, and live, I suppose, within the bounds of moderation at home, yet why is it that you have to suffer for one little transgression, while the rest of us go free?"

"It appears to me, Miss Olive," said Mr. Manning, "that the 'one little transgression' to which Miss Lottie alludes, the transgression of ten minutes' duration, was small indeed. Some one begged, insisted, that you take a vacant seat so that an interesting game need not be broken up, and—"

"I did that," said Lottie, interrupting, "I insisted almost rudely upon her taking the seat by me, and with the greatest reluctance she did it, and it was done only in a spirit of accommodation."

"Yes, that is all true, Miss Lottie. We all heard her decline at first and then yield because she could not resist the clamor for her to play. That certainly, Miss Olive, was a mere trifle. As to your drinking wine, the rest of us drank it without the slightest hesitation, but you posi-

tively refused it, had it carried away, would not even allow it by your side ; and when I saw this I ordered a lemonade, never dreaming that the waiter would bring a mixed glass. But indeed I did not think you would understand the reason of its color, so I waited and watched to see if you would drink, for I intended to have it changed again if your conscience would not allow you to touch it ; but just then you raised it to your lips, and I thought of it no more."

"So I was the tempter in the first place, and you in the second, Mr. Manning," said Lottie. "You and I then are the cause of all of Olive's trouble."

"Oh no," Olive exclaimed, "please don't think of it in that way. I exonerate everybody from blame but my poor, weak self. I alone was responsible, I alone guilty. Mr. Manning, you spoke of my transgression as small: do you think, sir, that any transgression is ever small?"

"Comparatively, yes, Miss Olive," was replied, "and yours was certainly the smallest in the whole category."

"But how is it, Miss Olive," said Mr. Lansing, "that you were guilty, as you call it, once, while we sinned continually, day and night, and have never thought or heard of our actions since, while you have been punished a whole year?"

"I can explain that, Mr. Lansing, easily

enough," said Lottie. "Olive is a very different Christian from what we are. She is consecrated, her religion is an every-day thing, while her life has been measured by the plumb-line of Scripture and her precept and practice have always accorded. Even at the Springs her light shone brightly. Everybody respected her conscience and principles, everybody knew she was a Christian at first sight; while we—why I doubt if a single person there had the slightest suspicion that our names were upon any church-roll in all the land."

Olive had attempted to interrupt Lottie while she was speaking, but without success, and now with a flushed face she exclaimed,

"Oh, Lottie, how little I deserve the words you have uttered! I only wish I were the consecrated Christian you represent me to be, but indeed I am far from it. I can easily explain to you how my example and influence caused others to go astray."

Then she drew a touching picture of the orphan boy who had clung to her with such implicit trust, of his promises, his temptations, the letter he had written and the question he had asked; indeed every event of the twelve months past she graphically, eloquently described. Her voice trembled with emotion as she went on, and there was emotion visible upon the faces

of her listeners. When she had finished, Lottie said seriously,

“Olive, while you were relating that truly pathetic story, I could not help rejoicing that I had no influence.”

“Oh but, Lottie,” replied Olive, “you have. I doubt whether there is any one devoid of influence, and a woman of your strength of character must have much.”

Lottie sighed and was silent.

“Miss Olive,” Mr. Manning said solemnly, “Miss Lottie was congratulating herself on her want of influence while you were speaking, whereas I was passing judgment upon myself for being nothing, doing nothing. If I am a Christian at all, I very much fear that my light has been compressed under a bushel all of my life.”

Mr. Lansing gazed out of the window in deep thought, but said nothing. At length Lottie spoke.

“Olive, is there not such a thing as being over-scrupulous?”

Olive’s mind ran back to the time when that word rang in her ears, when the fear of being counted over-scrupulous made her play cards and drink wine, and she replied,

“Better be counted over-scrupulous, Lottie, than to sin and lead others astray.”

The young men arose to leave, but Olive said,

“This is our prayer-meeting evening. Hark! the first bell is ringing now. Wont you, young gentlemen, remain to tea with us and then accompany us to church?”

“Thank you, Miss Olive,” Mr. Lansing replied, “we have an engagement to tea; but we will meet you and Miss Lottie at church and will return with you after the services are over if you have no objection.”

And so it was agreed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A LIVING CHURCH.

LOTTIE BELL had not been in L—— more than two weeks before she concluded that the church to which Olive belonged was a most singular church indeed. She had spoken of “relating experiences,” of “arraigning for non-attendance upon the Lord’s Supper,” as very old-fashioned practices, but the more she saw of this church the more old-fashioned it seemed to her. It was not a large church, yet its Sunday-school far outnumbered its membership. It was not a wealthy church, yet few churches in the State gave as much in Christian charity; and as to its Sunday-school, its treasury was always full, even though it supported a heathen boy and sent two young students to college. Everybody seemed so glad to give in this church. It was not like some churches where Lottie had visited, where, when money had to be collected for any purpose, it almost had to be pulled out of purses by force—when one brother would stand up and say, “I’ll give \$20,” and slowly take his seat, and everybody would have plenty of time to sit in admiration at his generosity before the next brother

would make up his mind to get up. In this church nobody's right hand seemed acquainted with the left that held the purse. Lottie remembered some place in the Bible, she could not remember where, when at some king's command a chest was set without at the gate of the house of the Lord for contributions, and every night it was so full they were compelled to empty it, and she thought so would it be with this church. Another very strange thing to her was that upon Wednesday night the chapel was full, and if the prayer-meetings are the thermometers of a church, "surely," she thought, "this one remains at summer heat." Everybody sang so heartily and the brethren prayed so fervently and seemed so bubbling over with something good to say, and the atmosphere was so full of love, and everybody went away stronger and happier after every prayer-meeting. But perhaps the strangest of all the strange things was that pastor and people seemed to live as convinced of the supreme importance of heartfelt and consistent piety, and that there were continual accessions to the church from the world. Dr. Lyman did not believe in spasmodic revivals. He said that a state of continuous revival should be the normal condition of every church, and that was the way it was in this church. Truly it *was* a singular church.

Upon the Wednesday evening referred to in the last chapter, when Lottie went with Dr. Greyson's family to prayer-meeting, she heard something which startled her very much. A young man arose voluntarily and made a confession. He said he had omitted prayer and reading God's Word for some time, had absented himself from the Lord's table, had grown indifferent in his service, that the pleasure which he once felt in working for his Saviour no longer filled his heart, his love had grown cold, his zeal was dead, and he begged the prayers of the entire church in his behalf. Prayer was immediately offered for the delinquent member, a melting prayer, that he might be healed of his backslidings, forgiven for his shortcomings, and be brought to his Father's loving arms again.

Lottie looked all the amazement she felt. "What had this young man done?" This she kept asking herself, but could find no answer. She did not recover from her wonder all of the evening, even though the young men returned with them and remained until a late hour: even though this was their last visit, since they were compelled to leave next morning. Her mind was abstracted. No matter what was transpiring around her, it would run back to the scene she witnessed in church. Throughout the week she was serious and thoughtful.

Upon the next Sabbath morning when an opportunity was given for any who wished prayer to rise, Lottie Bell was the first to stand up, and when any were invited to remain and meet the pastor in his study who desired to converse with him, she remained. Dr. Lyman had met her at Dr. Greyson's, knew her as Olive's special friend, had been much pleased with her, and was now greatly surprised at this request for prayer and conversation. To his first question when they were in the study together she replied,

"I have been living under a great mistake, sir. I thought I was a Christian when I joined the church, but I know now that I was deceived."

"It is a terrible thing to be deceived, my child."

"It is indeed, sir; I realize it fully."

"How do you expect to rectify your mistake?"

"I must seek, sir, begin over again: make a business of this thing; never give up until I am a true Christian."

"That is the way, the only way, to correct such a mistake as this; but perhaps, after all, you were not deceived; perhaps you have wandered from your Saviour, have not worked for him as you did at first, have not communed with him as much, like a child with a loving father, have not

read his Word as much. As exercise and nourishment are necessary to physical life, so too are they necessary to spiritual sustenance—work, prayer, and meditation.”

“I tell you, Dr. Lyman, I have not the first conception of what it is to be a Christian. I know absolutely nothing of those things you have just referred to. I have had good home instruction too, and my mother is a good Christian woman; but one thing I do know, and that is that I am not, I never have been, a Christian.”

“How do you know you are not, my child?”

“Because, sir, I have measured myself by another, and I fall far short of what she is.”

“May I ask who this standard is you have set for yourself?”

“Olive, sir.”

“Ah yes, and you think you do not equal Olive?”

“I know I do not, Dr. Lyman.”

“Tell me some of the points in which you and Olive differ.”

“Well, sir, the first great difference is, Olive is a Christian and I am not. I know this because Olive’s centre around which she revolves is Christ, and mine is not. She loves the Saviour, loves his service, is never so happy as when working for him, and she is ready to make any

sacrifice for him. At the Springs last summer she was beautifully consistent, her light shone far and wide; everybody respected her religion, everybody felt a deference for her convictions and conscience, and two trifling things she did—”

“Yes, she told me about those trifling things, of the time when she put ten minutes of pleasure against twelve months of sorrow. Poor child; she forgot that we cannot count the links in the chain of influence, they are so many and so closely interwoven. Olive stepped aside once, but the lesson she has since learned was sad but salutary, and I believe it will keep her from other missteps throughout her life.”

“Why, sir, what she did was a veritable trifle compared with what I did day and night, yet my conscience did not give me a solitary pang. Nobody knew I professed to be a Christian at the Springs, nobody would have believed it had they been told, so nobody was influenced by such a professor as I. Dr. Lyman, I have never done one good thing in all my life: I have set no example for any one to follow, I have influenced no one for good. Christians bring forth fruit; I have not one piece to show for all these six years of church membership, so you know I am no Christian.”

“‘Nothing but leaves;’ is that the song for you, my child?”

"I am not sure, sir, that I can even claim to have borne 'leaves.'"

"You say you have never done one good thing in all your life, yet I have been told differently."

"Oh please don't talk that way to me," and Lottie burst into tears. "I am a sinner; please talk to me as a sinner. I have done nothing for him. I am only a guilty sinner in God's sight."

Dr. Lyman had probed her heart; he saw that she was thoroughly awakened and truly convicted, that she felt she was worse than nothing in the sight of heaven. Whether she was a Christian, a poor, wandering, backsliding Christian, or whether she had been deceived when she joined the church, he could not tell; but he talked to her sweetly, tenderly as a sinner, directing her to Him who came to seek and save the sinner, and then he bowed in prayer and committed her to the care of the sinner's Friend. Dr. Lyman promised to call upon her soon, and Lottie arose, bade him good-morning, and passed out of the study just as another inquiring friend came in.

Olive was in genuine distress. She had been sure that Lottie was a Christian, though she had grown cold in her Master's service; but Lottie would listen to nothing of the kind, and declared that she had been deceived from the first.

Dr. and Mrs. Greyson and Olive watched the struggle with much prayer and intense interest. For a week it continued, Dr. Lyman calling nearly every day to see her, while Olive was her constant companion and counsellor. At the end of this time a dim light dawned on Lottie's mind, which grew brighter and brighter, until in full confidence and in perfect peace she could exclaim, "My Lord and my God!" It was beautiful now to hear her talk of her Saviour as of some one she had just met, of Christian duty, responsibility, and influence, but it was sad to hear her mourn for the lost years of her life.

"I know Jesus has forgiven me for all this," she said, "but how can I ever forgive myself for wasting all this precious time upon the world!"

Lottie Bell was certainly a Christian now, and she cut short her visit to Olive that she might hurry home and go to work. She saw the needs of her home, her church, her community, and full of zeal for her Master she went to do what she could towards a reformation.

Two other persons had been secretly measuring themselves by Olive Greyson. Even before Lottie Bell had seen herself in her true light, Mr. Manning had been searching his heart, silently communing with himself and inquiring what the difference was between himself

and that consecrated girl. He could not comfort himself with the hope that was *then* within him; instead, he had to run back, dig up some fossil hopes at the time of his conversion, and dwell upon the memories of the joy that once flooded his heart in the long ago when Jesus spoke peace to his soul. He clung to these, he thanked the good Lord for even this little ray of sunlight, for even the remembrance of the past, and for hopes so long buried that they were almost beyond present recognition. But oh the loss of the intervening years! How he mourned over these, how he longed to live them over again! Now that he felt he had received a "welcome home" to his Father's arms again, he began to look around for an opportunity to do good, and commenced by making an appeal to his cousin. Here he found a heart made mellow by a Christian example and influence; here was a wandering Christian, ready, yea, longing, to return and do his first works over again. As they walked to prayer-meeting together, Mr. Lansing said,

"I really believe, Douglass, that the influence of passive Christians is the most baneful influence in the world."

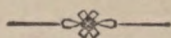
"I do not wonder, Fred," said Mr. Manning, "that you and I should believe this, since our eyes have been opened. I did not dream before

what a far-reaching influence a Christian wields; and if this is not decidedly for Christ it is decidedly against him; there can be no middle ground. You used the word 'passive' Christian, and while he may be passive by non-activity, yet his influence is by no means passive; it cannot be. I do not believe that a true Christian can remain ever listless and inactive; I believe a time will come when he will be aroused from his lethargy and made to go to work."

"Thank God we were awakened before our days were nearly spent," said Mr. Lansing.

"Thank God for his boundless love and mercy," replied Mr. Manning from a full heart.

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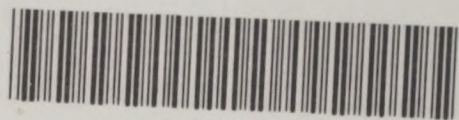








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